THE BAD BATCH'S ECHO: THE LIFE OF A SOLDIER!

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE | ISSUE 208

STAR WARS INSIDER

Exclusive Fiction!
The epic final chapter of *Star Wars: The High Republic: Starlight*!

INTERVIEW:
Daniel José Older
The High Republic author on the thrilling climax of Phase One!

The Art of Effects
Behind the scenes at Industrial Light & Magic's VFX Art Department!

Leader In Waiting?
Bo-Katan Kryze and the battle for the crown of Mandalore!

TOP SIX DROID SIDEKICKS!
INSIDER'S PICK OF THE MOST RELIABLE MECHANICALS

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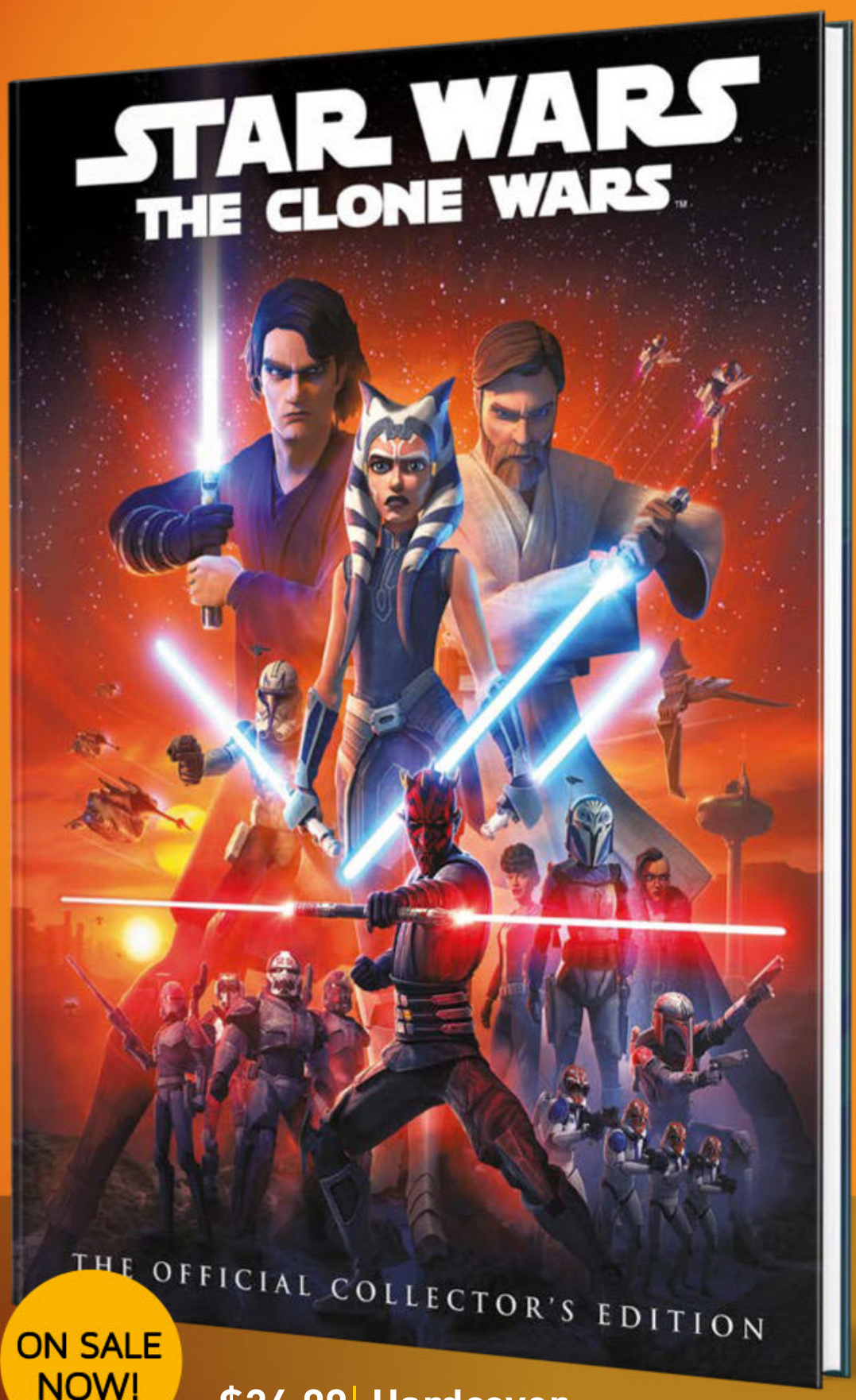
CELEBRATE *STAR WARS:* ***THE CLONE WARS!***



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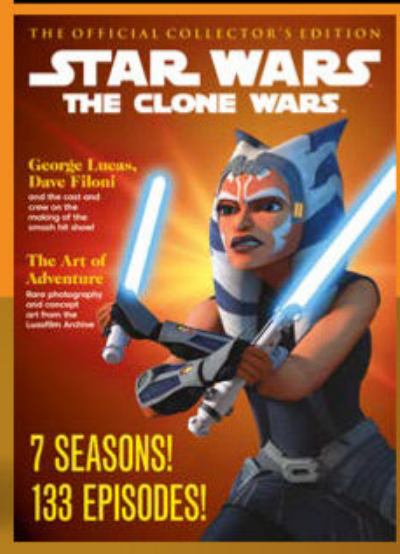

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EXCLUSIVE COVER

Follow the Emmy award-winning series through seven seasons and one movie, with an in-depth guide to every episode, stunning concept art, and behind-the-scenes interviews with supervising director Dave Filoni and his team.

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WELCOME...

I consider myself very fortunate to be the editor of *Star Wars Insider*, but I must admit to holding a festering disappointment that I never achieved one of my numerous *Star Wars*-related childhood ambitions, which was to work for Industrial Light & Magic. It looked to me like it must be so much fun to spend all day drawing spaceships, making models of them, and then blowing them up! Like I said, it was a childhood ambition. It's probably safer for everyone that I work with words and not high explosives!

A great many of the people employed by the esteemed effects company now do so because they had similar dreams as kids but were rather less feckless than me in pursuing them. In this issue, *Insider* has the privilege of speaking with several members of the ILM VFX art department to learn about how they turn one-line ideas into believable worlds, creatures, and vehicles for the galaxy far, far, away. If anything, their story makes me want to work there even more! Maybe they'll let me visit?

But that's not all we have for you this issue. *The High Republic* author Daniel José Older tells us about his upcoming novel, *Midnight Horizon*; actor Dame Harriet Walter talks about her time on the set of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015); and we reach the shattering conclusion of our *The High Republic: Starlight* short fiction series with part two of Justina Ireland's "Shadows Remain." But don't worry—there are many more stories yet to come...!

May the Force be with you!

Christopher Cooper
Editor

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STAR WARS INSIDER

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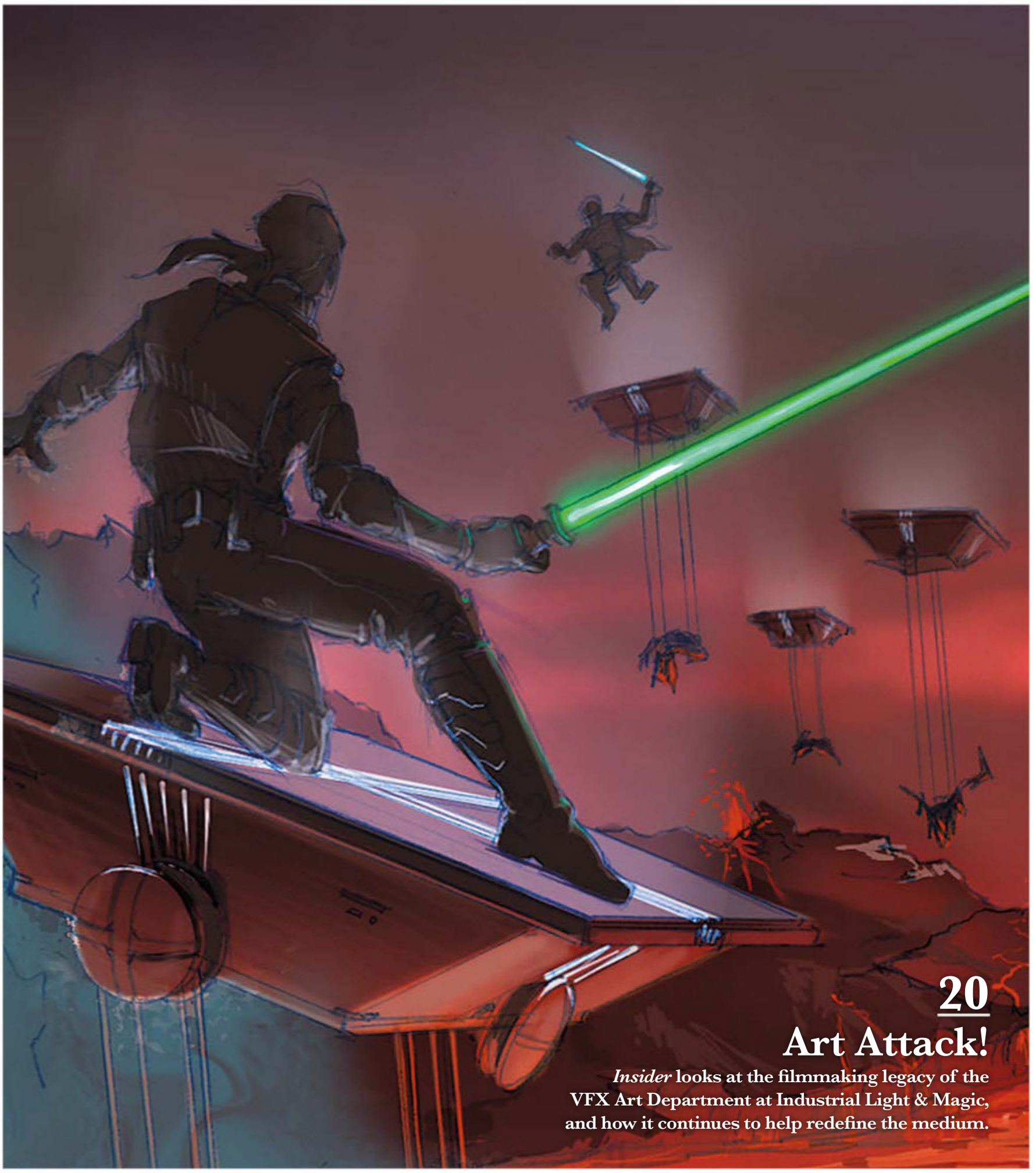

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Art Attack!

Insider **looks at the filmmaking legacy of the VFX Art Department at Industrial Light & Magic, and how it continues to help redefine the medium.**

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STAR WARS INSIDER

LAUNCHPAD

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The Law Wins !

"The Marshal" Captures VFX Award

Industrial Light & Magic have added another award to their bursting trophy cabinet, this time for their work on the second season of the Disney+ series *The Mandalorian* (2019-present).

The Hollywood Professional Association recognized the effects company at their 2021 annual awards ceremony, in the Outstanding Visual Effects for an episodic (under 13 episodes) or non-theatrical feature category. The episode in question was Chapter 9, "The Marshal," which featured the infamous krayt dragon making light work of numerous Sand People during a thrilling action sequence. Receiving the honor were

ILM visual effects artists Joe Bauer, Richard Bluff, Jeff Capogreco, Hal Hickel, and and visual effects producer Abbigail Keller.

The award follows several other nominations for Season Two, including an Emmy nomination for Best Drama Series, and Best Director for John Favreau from the Director's Guild of America, again for "The Marshal."

Composer Ludwig Göransson, has also been nominated for a Grammy for Best Score Soundtrack for Visual Media for Chapters 13 to 16 of the hit Disney+ series. Already a triple-Grammy winner, this latest nomination is the eighth for the talented Göransson, and we'll find out if he wins during the ceremony on January 31st, 2022.

Starcruiser Style

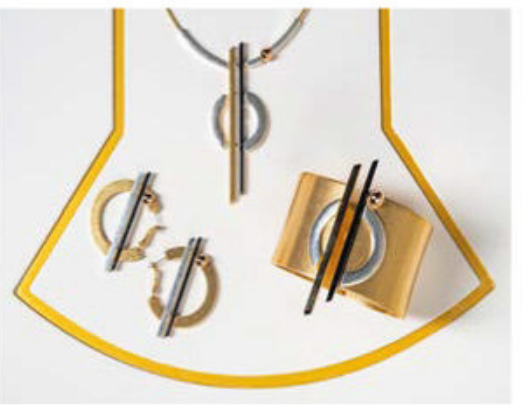
Haute Couture for *Halcyon* Holidaymakers

The launch of *Star Wars:* Galactic Starcruiser at Walt Disney World, Florida, is approaching at light speed, with bookings for the flight into adventure selling even faster. But guests won't have to worry about making sure they look the part.

As Disney Parks and an army of Imagineers make final preparations for the inaugural launch of Galactic Starcruiser, details have been released of the unique apparel guests will be able to purchase to help enhance the already totally immersive experience, even if they've turned up fully kitted out in *Star Wars*-inspired outfits of their own.

The Starcruiser will have its own unique fashion boutique, The Chandrila Collection, where guests will be able to pick up pieces to add to their existing costumes, such as headpieces including Twi'lek headtails and Togruta montrals, or adorn themselves with items from an exclusive *Halcyon* line of jewelry. Every item of original apparel takes inspiration from real *Star Wars* costumes, incorporating elements from sources such as Padmé Amidala's Tatooine gown from *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* (2002), but there are also reproductions of famous outfits like Princess Leia Organa's gown from *A New Hope* (1977). There's even a captain's uniform—available exclusively in children's sizes!

Star Wars: Galactic Starcruiser opens on March 1, 2022.

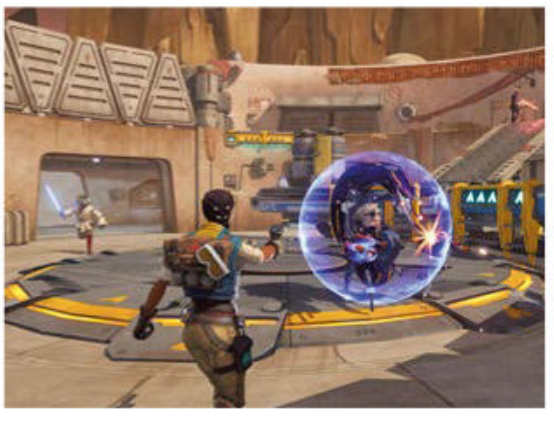


Aye Aye, Captain

Assigned: *Halcyon*'s Commanding Officer

Amid a flurry of action that saw lucky media correspondents (including *Insider* contributor and StarWars.com's own Kristin Baver—see the site for her full report) score early previews to the *Star Wars*: Galactic Starcruiser at Walt Disney World Resort, the captain of the space-faring liner was revealed.

Captain Keevan is a brand new character to the *Star Wars* pantheon, but it has been promised that her links to some iconic moments in galactic history make up part of her backstory. Keevan's past, along with her hidden secrets, will no-doubt be revealed to guests lucky enough to have booked a voyage on the *Halcyon*, which launches this spring.



Into The Arena

New *Star Wars* Game Reveals its Hunters

A rogue's gallery of player characters were recently unleashed in the latest trailer for *Star Wars*: Hunters, the new multiplayer arena-combat videogame from Lucasfilm Games and developer Zynga.

Joining the action on battlefields based on iconic *Star Wars* locations such as Hoth and Endor, will be a rocket-firing, masked bounty hunter named Imara Vex, a ferocious Wookiee called Grozz, and J-3DI—a droid programmed to be a Jedi!

Star Wars: Hunters arrives on Nintendo Switch, the Apple App Store, and Google Play in 2022.

Space Fantasy Island

Lose yourself in LEGO® *Star Wars*: Castaways

The latest fun gaming collaboration from the LEGO® Group and Lucasfilm Games has players crash landing on a mysterious island teeming with new characters, classic *Star Wars* moments, devious puzzles, and exciting battles.

The key feature of the game, which is available now on Apple Arcade, is the player's ability to create and customize their own in-game LEGO® *Star Wars* minifigure character, who becomes your avatar as you explore the island, have adventures, and make new friends. Players can also socialize with real-world friends in the Social Hub, communicate with LEGO® emotes, and team up to to play through simulations. A planetary threat encourages players to engage with the Castaways community across eight story chapters, side missions, and many other activities set in different areas of the island, including the beach, Spaceport, Observatory, Hippodrome, and Marketplace.

LEGO® *Star Wars*: Castaways is available on iPhone, iPad, Mac, and Apple TV.

PRODUCTION DIARY

Our regular summary of *Star Wars* movies and television series currently filming:

IN PRODUCTION

STAR WARS ANDOR

Starring Diego Luna as Cassian Andor
Disney+

Episode Director: Tony Gilroy
Cast Includes: Genevieve O'Reilly, Stellan Skarsgård, Denise Gough, and Kyle Soller.

STAR WARS OBI-WAN KENOBI

Starring Ewan McGregor as Obi-Wan Kenobi
Disney+

Director: Deborah Chow
Cast Includes: Hayden Christensen, Moses Ingram, Joel Edgerton, Bonnie Piesse, Kumail Nanjiani, Indira Varma, Rupert Friend, O'Shea Jackson Jr., Sung Kang, Simone Kessell and Benny Safdie.

COMING SOON

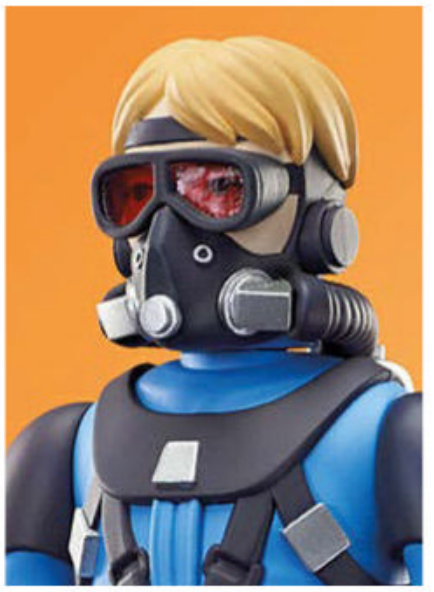
STAR WARS THE BAD BATCH

Season Two
Starring Dee Bradley Baker and Michelle Ang
Disney+, Spring 2022

A Giant Among Jedi

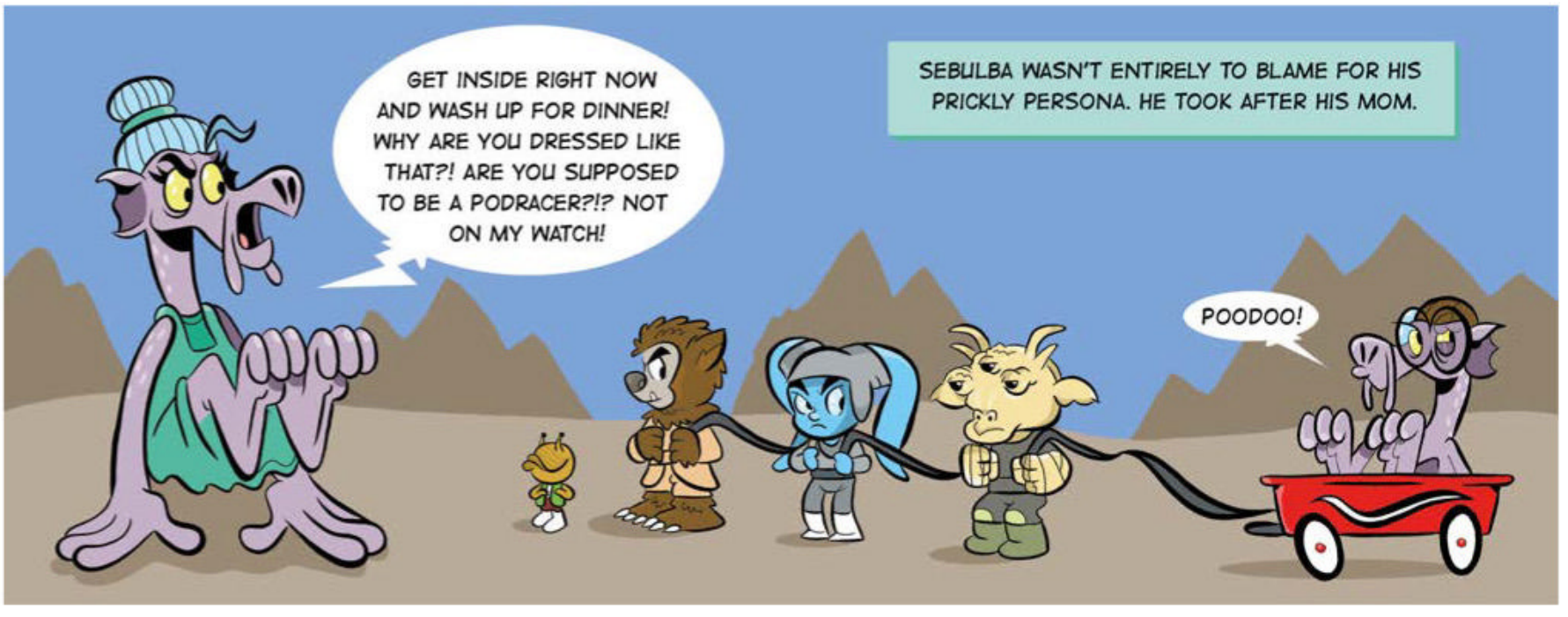
The larger than life hero that saved the galaxy

Based on early concept art by Ralph McQuarrie depicting the soon-to-be-legendary character, Gentle Giant Ltd.'s Luke Skywalker (Concept) Jumbo Figure builds on the company's series of 12-inch figures that are dedicated to distinctly different renditions of classic *Star Wars* characters. Designed by Eamon O'Donoghue and sculpted by Gentle Giant Ltd., this super-sized collectible comes with a retro-style cardback and retails for $80. Available to pre-order now at **GentleGiantLtd.com**.



THE LIGHT SIDE

By Jamie Cosley


GET INSIDE RIGHT NOW AND WASH UP FOR DINNER! WHY ARE YOU DRESSED LIKE THAT?! ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO BE A PODRACER?!? NOT ON MY WATCH!
SEBULBA WASN'T ENTIRELY TO BLAME FOR HIS PRICKLY PERSONA. HE TOOK AFTER HIS MOM.
POODOO!

The Lightsaber of a Legend

Serve the light side with Leia Organa's laser sword

Princess, senator, general, Jedi. Leia Organa's many accomplishments became an inspiration to generations of *Star Wars* fans. Hidden away on Ahch-To, Leia's lightsaber was finally revealed and gifted to Rey in *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019). As part of Hasbro's celebrated Black Series, and replicated in stunning detail, the Leia Organa Force FX Elite Lightsaber allows you to hold the rebel leader's Jedi weapon in your hands just as Rey did when she faced off against the Emperor. Set to ship in Fall 2022, pre-orders are open at **Shop.Hasbro.com**.

Workshop Warrior

Reward Babu Frik's bravery with hugs and cuddles

Hey, hey! Kijimi City's favorite droidsmith, Babu Frik, stole the hearts of audiences across the globe when he cheerfully tweaked the memory circuits of C-3PO in *The Rise of Skywalker*. Mattel have recreated the energetic engineer as a squeezable plush toy with a vinyl head that realistically captures the character's wrinkled visage. Standing at 9 inches tall and featuring signature Babu Frik sounds from the movie, this cute and cuddly plush is available at your favorite retail outlet, priced $24.99.

The *StarWars* DotColumn

Fascinating features and articles from the digital vaults of StarWars.com

Add StarWars.com/Insider to your browser bookmarks to enjoy *Insider*'s pick of the best of the official *Star Wars* website.

Eerie Easter Eggs
Return to Darth Vader's castle with StarWars.com for in-jokes, gags, and secrets from LEGO® *Star Wars* Terrifying Tales that you might have missed!

The Nihil Heirarchy
Find out how the vicious marauders of the High Republic era organize themselves, with the help of Emily Shkoukani of the Lucasfilm Story Group.

Cooking up a Storm
StarWars.com's master chef Jenn Fujikawa discusses how she dreamed up the out-of-this-galaxy recipes for Insight Editions' *Star Wars* cookbook.

For Mandalore!

Inspire your followers with one of Mandalore's most fabled warriors

The leader of the Nite Owls, a veteran of the Clone Wars, and a survivor of the Purge, Bo-Katan Kryze stood with the Mandalorian on his quest to retrieve Grogu from Moff Gideon. The Bo-Katan Kryze Sixth Scale Figure from Hot Toys replicates Bo-Katan's look from *The Mandalorian*'s second season, complete with her distinctive helmet and dual blasters. Measuring approximately 11-inches tall, this statue is expected to ship in April 2022 and can be pre-ordered at **Sideshow.com**.

Children of the Watch

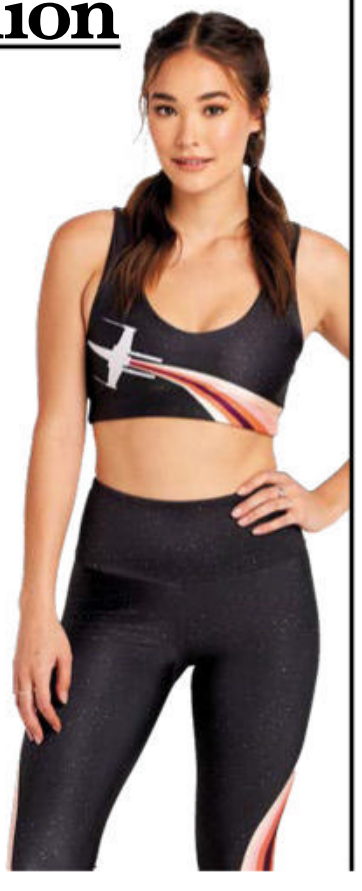
Increase your odds of arriving on time

While the *Star Wars* galaxy happened "a long time ago," there's no reason it can't keep up with the times in terms of timekeeping technology. Citizen brings futuristic precision to its *Star Wars* line of watches with several new stainless steel pieces that celebrate eternally popular characters R2-D2, C-3PO, and Boba Fett. The new trio of watches are splash resistant, have digital and LCD displays, and even provide a temperature reading.

The R2-D2 and Boba Fett timepieces are priced at $350 each, while the C-3PO design retails for $375. Order at **CitizenWatch.com**.

Fighter Fashion

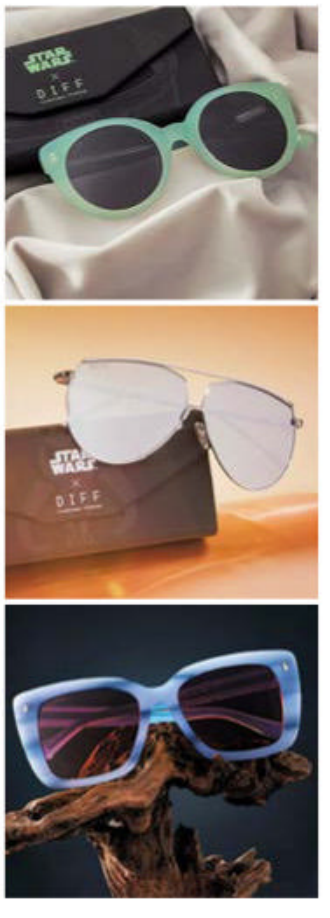
Lock S-foils in "relaxed" position



Just as Luke Skywalker learned on Dagobah, training to be a Jedi can really make you build up a sweat. Goldsheep Clothing has you covered with its sporty X-wing Takeoff U-Bra and matching X-wing Takeoff Legging. Made with four-way stretch material, this ensemble is perfect for everything from your daily workout to a friendly social gathering. The U-Bra is priced at $60, while the Legging retails for $98. Both can be ordered at **GoldsheepClothing.com**.

Spectacular Shades

This is the way to summer style



When you're gazing at Tatooine's twin suns, safeguarding your eyes is vital. DIFF Charitable Eyewear's *Star Wars* sunglasses collection has three new frame designs inspired by *The Mandalorian*'s Grogu, Ahsoka Tano, and Mando himself. The lenses have a special breath reveal feature that provides a fun surprise related to each protagonist. Available at **DIFFeyewear.com**, the Grogu and Ahsoka Tano pieces retail for $124 each, while the Mandalorian sunglasses are priced at $115.

MANDO MERCH

The latest bounty on which to blow your beskar

Embrace the Light Side

Bring home the galaxy's friendliest Force user

Grogu's loveable personality and adorable face are two of many traits that make him so appealing to fans. Yogibo, known for reinventing the beanbag, has released The Child Hugger (A), a cuddly version of Grogu that is perfect for sitting on, playing with, and hugging! Head over to **Yogibo.com** to order yours today.

Covered with Comfort

Curl up in style to outlast the winter weather

Perfect for those cold nights on Maldo Kreis, the CozyChic *The Mandalorian* Blanket (B) will shelter you with a cozy warmth that emanates from its 100% polyester microfiber fabric. Measuring 45-inches by 60-inches, the sprawling spread is priced at $148 and is available at **BarefootDreams.com**.

B

A Bountiful Bunch

Capture the magic of *The Mandalorian*'s inner circle

The Mandalorian welcomed many intriguing outlaws into the *Star Wars* galaxy, and now those friends and foes are becoming part of Hasbro's legendary Black Series line (C). Launching in Spring 2022, 6-inch figures have been announced for the Mandalorian & Grogu on Maldo Kreis (complete with ice spider!), Cobb Vanth, a robed Boba Fett on Tython, and Migs Mayfeld in his Imperial disguise. The Maldo Kreis figure is a Target exclusive, while ordering information for the others can be found at **Hasbro.com**.

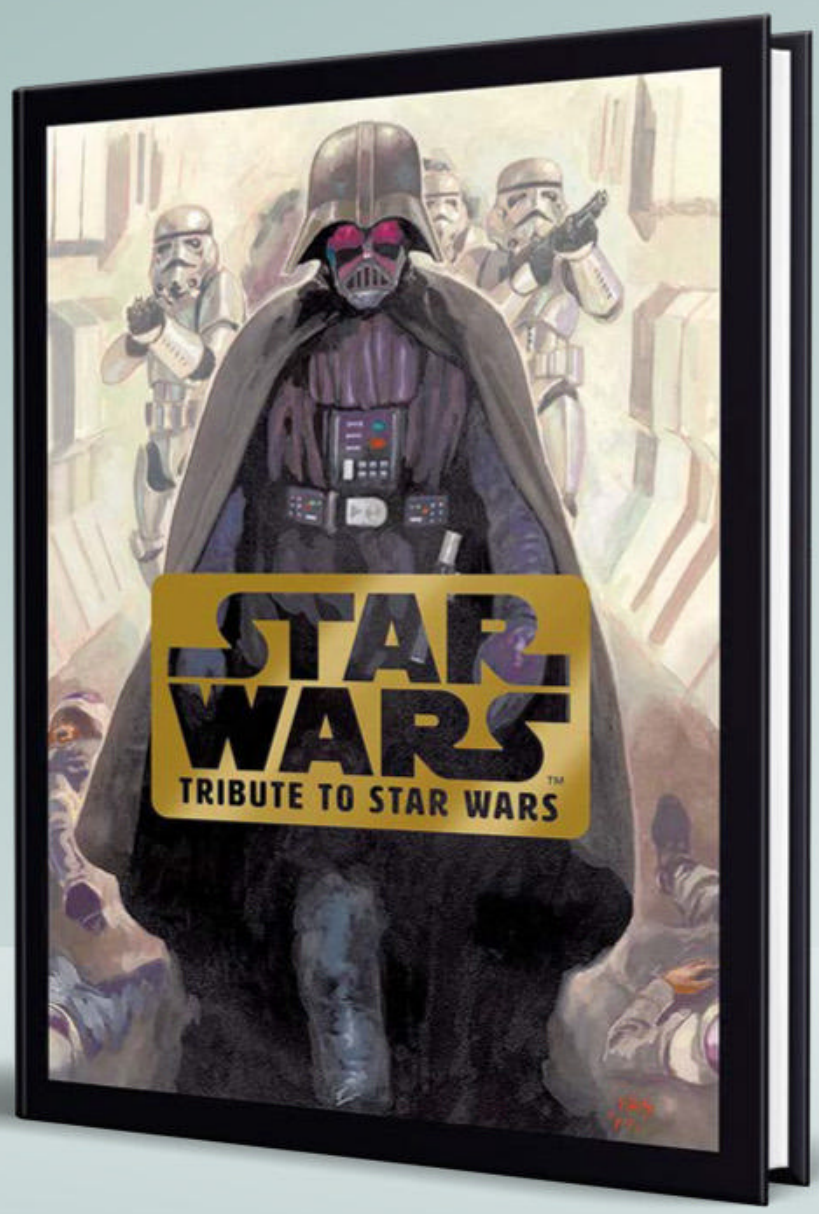
This Is The Way... to Walk

Move with confidence in these colorful clogs

Striding with Din Djarin every step of the way, Grogu kept pace with his protector throughout their long journey. The Crocs Classic Grogu Clog (D) combines a vibrant graphic pattern styled after the Child with lightweight shielding for your feet. Priced at $59.99, these clogs can be purchased at **Crocs.com**.

Book Club

View the saga through a different lens in the latest *Star Wars* book releases.



Alternate Visions

Top manga artists put a new spin on the saga in *Tribute to Star Wars*

The *Star Wars* saga, based on universal mythological archetypes, has always resonated with audiences across the globe. The Jedi themselves were based in part on the tradition of Japanese samurai, and the past year has seen numerous Japanese creators reinterpret the galaxy far, far away through their own eyes. In September 2021, nine anime studios presented their own unique adventures through the *Star Wars: Visions* anthology on Disney+, and this January will see manga artists take the stage in an all-new collection.

Tribute to Star Wars unites forty-five of Japan's leading manga artists (including Akira Himekawa, Kamome Shirahama, and Taiyo Matsumoto) in one spectacular, star-spanning project. Originally published in Japan in 2019, this English-language edition is being published in hardcover by Viz Media.

Each manga artist brings their signature style to the characters and settings of their choosing, depicting the *Star Wars* galaxy in ways you've never imagined. The artworks are accompanied by profile of the *mangaka* creator, including their previous works and their thoughts on the sci-fi aesthetics of the universe that first wowed audiences back in 1977.

"The idea that it's not just us that exist in this universe, but all sorts of other people and creatures too, was such a thrill," explains Akira Himekawa, the pen name for the creative partnership of two female manga artists known both for their *Legend of Zelda* adaptations and their work in the manga anthology *Star Wars: The Legends of Luke Skywalker*, released in January 2020. "Looking back at the past twenty years, during which time I worked on many stories, I can say that *Star Wars* contains all of the important elements of good storytelling: youthful energy, overcoming challenges, personal growth, and charismatic characters."

A perfect addition to the collections of fans of both *Star Wars* art and aficionados of Japanese media, this 96-page *Tribute to Star Wars* is available in bookstores now.

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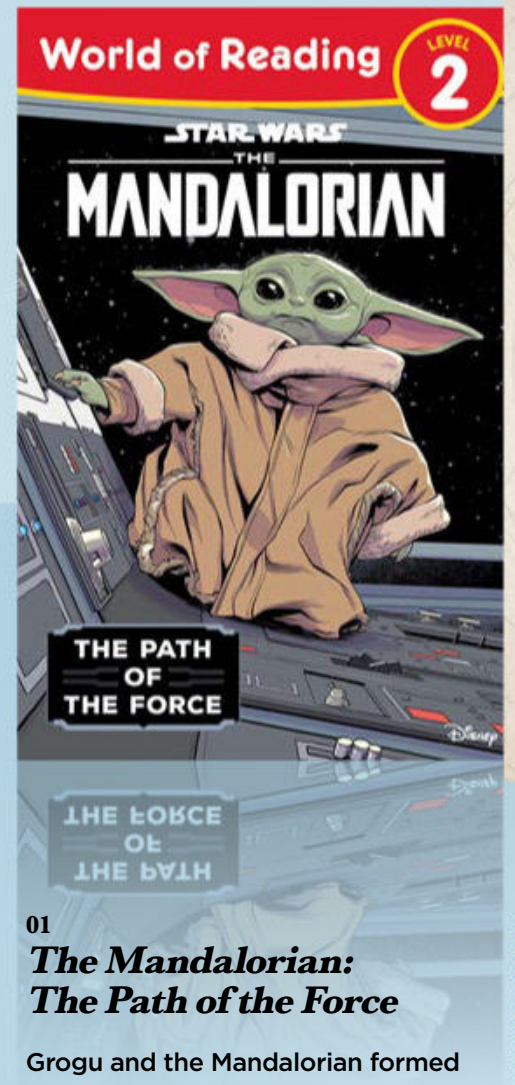
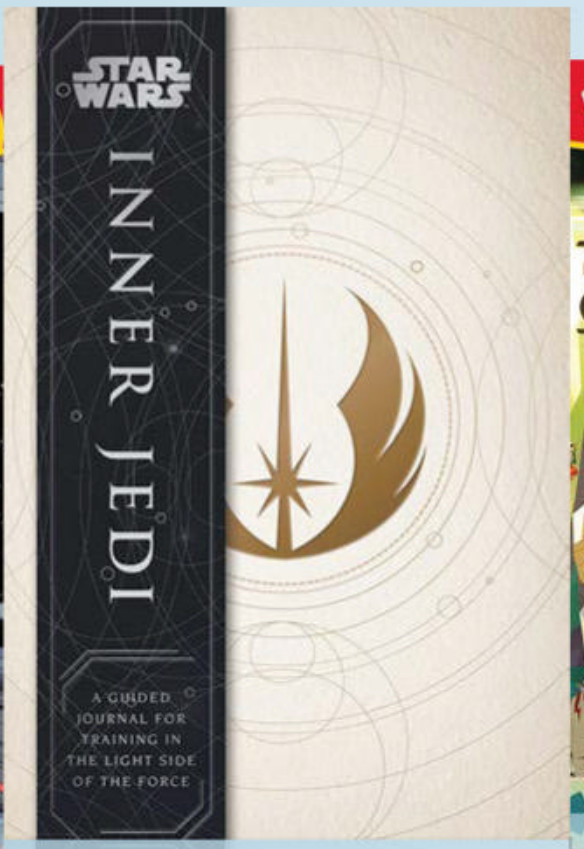


The Mandalorian: The Path of the Force

Grogu and the Mandalorian formed a close bond, but for the child's own safety, he had to be returned to his own people: the Jedi! In this paperback adventure adapted by Brooke Vitale, Mando and Grogu meet rival Mandalorians, the ex-Jedi Ahsoka Tano, and even the legendary Jedi Master Luke Skywalker. With kid-friendly sentence structures and dynamic full-color artwork, this entry in the World of Reading series is a fun and educational way to revisit Season Two for younger fans. Published by Disney Lucasfilm Press, *The Mandalorian: The Path of the Force* is on sale now.

02



Star Wars: Inner Jedi

Star Wars: Inner Jedi: A Guided Journal for Training in the Light Side of the Force, published by Insight Editions, is a 224-page hardcover journal that allows anyone to channel their inner Jedi. In this year-long guided journal, readers will experience the teachings of the Jedi Order and the spiritual philosophy of the Force, with an emphasis on the tenets of selflessness and tranquility. Through a combination of daily journaling, free-writing prompts, list-making, coloring meditations, and more, *Star Wars: Inner Jedi* will serve as a daily reminder that the Force will be with you, always! In stores now.

03

Star Wars: Galaxy of Creatures

Galaxy of Creatures began as a series of animated shorts on the *Star Wars Kids* YouTube channel and on StarWarsKids.com, and now continues in an all-new young readers book from Disney Lucasfilm Press, on sale now. Join "Aree," an inquisitive droid belonging to the Galactic Society of Creature Enthusiasts, as he treks across the galaxy to learn everything there is to know about its native wildlife. Learn how to train porgs to do tricks, or even how to brush a rancor's teeth! No matter what the challenge, Aree has answers to the biggest, strangest, and silliest creature questions.

Comics Roundup

Chart a course for the stars in this month's *Star Wars* comics.

Your Flight is Now Boarding!

Adventure is Your Destination in *Star Wars: Halcyon Legacy*

At Florida's Walt Disney World Resort, you can experience Star Wars in the real world, strolling through the bazaars of Black Spire Outpost in the *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge* themed land. Beginning in March 2022, fans will be able to live their own Star Wars adventures even further by booking a voyage aboard the *Star Wars: Galactic Starcruiser*, which combines a two-night immersive voyage into a single, unforgettable experience. But there's no reason to wait that long, not when you can book a passage aboard the same galactic starcruiser in the pages of a new Marvel miniseries!

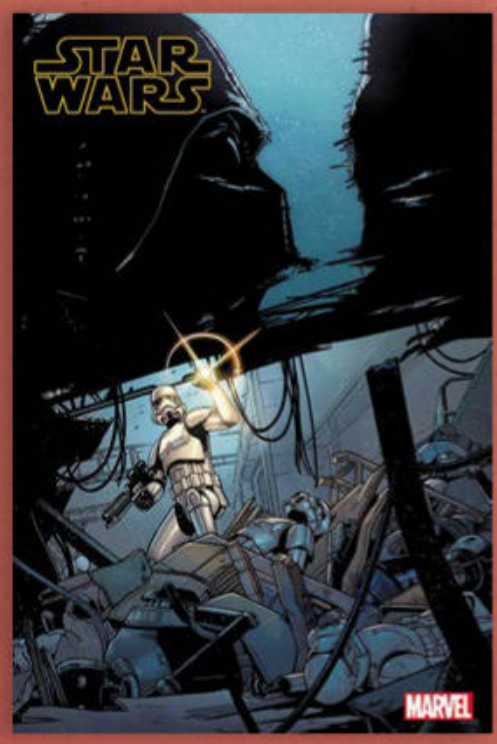
Star Wars: Halcyon Legacy is a five-part saga that sheds light on this legendary cruise ship from the High Republic to the age of the First Order. Writer Ethan Sacks (*Bounty Hunters*) and artist Will Sliney (*The Rise of Kylo Ren*) reunite for this effort, continuing their creative partnership from Marvel's previous limited series, *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge*. "In the summer of 1977, my life was forever changed as a four-year-old by two experiences that have seared themselves in my brain for all these years: Seeing *Star Wars* in the movie theater and visiting [Walt] Disney World for the first time," Sacks told StarWars.com recently. "The chance to contribute to the lore of both with *Halcyon Legacy*—the tale of the ship that will be an integral memory for so many fellow fans—is an incredible honor."

The century-spanning narrative visits the iconic vessel at different points in galactic history, including such flashpoints as the Jedi team of Nibs and Burry fending off a Nihil attack, and an early partnership between Lando Calrissian and Hondo Ohnaka. The featured tale takes place between *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017) and *The Rise of Skywalker* (2019) and leads directly into the events of the Walt Disney World Resort experience.

Featuring cover art by E.M. Gist *Star Wars: Halcyon Legacy* #1 is available in comic stores on January 19.

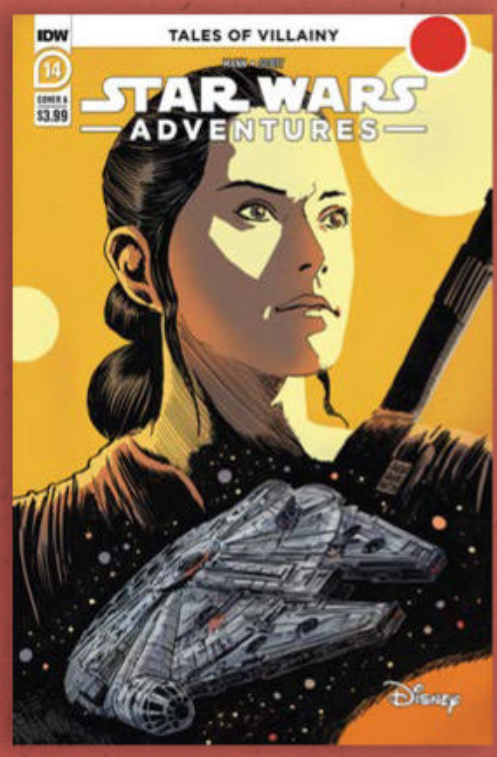
Star Wars #21

On sale January 26, the latest installment in Marvel's ongoing *Star Wars* series sees Rebel ace Shara Bey—mother of legendary Resistance pilot Poe Dameron—stranded aboard an Imperial warship after a mission gone wrong. Left for dead aboard the Star Destroyer *Tarkin's Will*, Shara has somehow survived and escaped into the bowels of the massive ship. But Commander Zahra has had enough of her tricks. Can Shara live long enough to escape her moving prison? Writer Charles Soule is joined by artists Ramon Rosanas and Marco Castiello for this thrilling tale of ingenuity and survival.



Star Wars Adventures #14

A pair of hair-raising exploits are packaged in this digest-sized comic suitable for all ages. First, writer George Mann (*Doctor Who*) brings Rey, Chewbacca, Finn, and BB-8 into the crosshairs of a bounty hunter aligned with the First Order, when they choose the wrong spot to repair the *Millennium Falcon*! In the second story, The *High Republic* author Justina Ireland tells a tale of the Republic's greatest enemies, the Nihil. Featuring art by Butch Mapa, Nick Brokenshire, and Francesco Francavilla, *Star Wars Adventures* #14 from IDW Publishing is on sale January 19.



Star Wars: Crimson Reign #2 (of 5)

The war for the galactic underworld rages on in this pivotal limited series that chronicles the power plays of Qi'ra and the criminal syndicate Crimson Dawn. When Qi'ra dispatches two assassins on a deadly assignment, she hopes to plunge the galaxy into chaos. The killers are the Force-blinded Ochi of Bestoon and the mysterious Deathstick, and nothing will stand in the way of their mission! Marvel's *Star Wars: Crimson Reign* #2, by writer Charles Soule and artist Steven Cummings, with a cover by Leinil Francis Yu, is available now.

Incoming

Don't Miss These Upcoming Releases

JANUARY

Doctor Aphra #18
Marvel Comics
Writer: Alyssa Wong
Artist: Minkyu Jung
Cover Artist: Sara Pichelli

Bounty Hunters #20
Marvel Comics
Writer: Ethan Sacks
Artists: Paolo Villanelli
Cover Artist: Giuseppe Camuncoli

FEBUARY

Darth Vader #20
Marvel Comics
Writer: Greg Pak
Artist: Guiu Villanova
Cover Artist:
Ryan Stegman

Star Wars #22
Marvel Comics
Writer: Charles Soule
Artist: Ramon Rosanas
Cover Artist:
Carlo Pagulayan

Halcyon Legacy #2 (of5)
Marvel Comics
Writer: Ethan Sacks
Artists: Will Sliney
Cover Artist: E.M. Gist

STAR WARS THE HIGH REPUBLIC

Luminous Lore

Shining a light on *Star Wars: The High Republic*.

Light, Life, and Death?

Do dark times lie ahead for Starlight Beacon?

The Jedi face an uncertain future in three new novels from the *New York Times* bestselling *The High Republic* series that bring a devastating climax to the first phase of the new saga.

Claudia Gray returns to the galaxy far, far away with *The Fallen Star*. Still grieving their losses, the Jedi and their Padawans look to the jewel of the Outer Rim, Starlight Beacon, to help them recover. A gleaming symbol of the High Republic, the station is a bastion of knowledge and culture, as well as providing safe haven for those fleeing the Nihil's savage raids. But the Nihil's deadly overlord, Marchion Ro, has set his eyes upon it and won't stop until the light of the Jedi Order itself is extinguished.

In Justina Ireland's *Mission to Disaster*, we return to the youngest Jedi Knight in a generation, Vernestra Rwoh and her Padawan Imri Cantaros,

facing off against the treacherous Nihil once again. And all is not what it may seem in Daniel José Older's *Midnight Horizon*, as the Jedi Knights battle the anarchistic marauders for light and life.

Prepare for a thrilling ride and plenty of tears when this trio of stories arrive in bookstores, with *The Fallen Star* and *Mission to Disaster* debuting January 4, and *Midnight Horizon* following on February 4, 2022.

Incoming Comics

***Trail of Shadows* #4 (of 5)**
Writer: Daniel José Older
Artist: Dave Watcher
Cover: David López
Marvel Comics
On sale January 5

***Eye of the Storm* #1**
Writer: Charles Soule
Artist: Guillermo Sanna
Cover: Ryan Brown
Marvel Comics
On sale January 12

***The High Republic Adventures* #12**
Writer: Daniel José Older
Artist and Cover:
Harvey Tolibao
IDW Comics
On sale January 12

Galactic Bake-Off Spectacular
Writers: Daniel José Older, Vita Ayala
Artists: Toni Bruno, Jo Cheol-hong
IDW Comics
On sale January 19 2022

Republic Roundup

AVAILABLE NOW

Light of the Jedi
Writer: Charles Soule
Del Rey, Adult novel

A Test of Courage
Writer: Justina Ireland
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Middle grade novel

The Great Jedi Rescue
Writer: Cavan Scott
Artist: Petur Antonsson
Disney Lucasfilm Press, 8x8 storybook

Into the Dark
Writer: Claudia Gray
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Young adult novel

The Rising Storm
Writer: Cavan Scott
Del Rey, Adult novel

Race to Crashpoint Tower
Writer: Daniel José Older
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Middle grade novel

Out of the Shadows
Writer: Justina Ireland
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Young adult novel

Tempest Runner
Writer: Cavan Scott
Del Rey, Audio original novel

The Edge of Balance Vol. 1
Writers: Justina Ireland and Shima Shinya
Artist: Mizuki Sakakibara
Viz, 13+ Manga

Showdown at the Fair
Writer: George Mann
Artist: Petur Antonsson
Disney Lucasfilm Press, 8x8 storybook

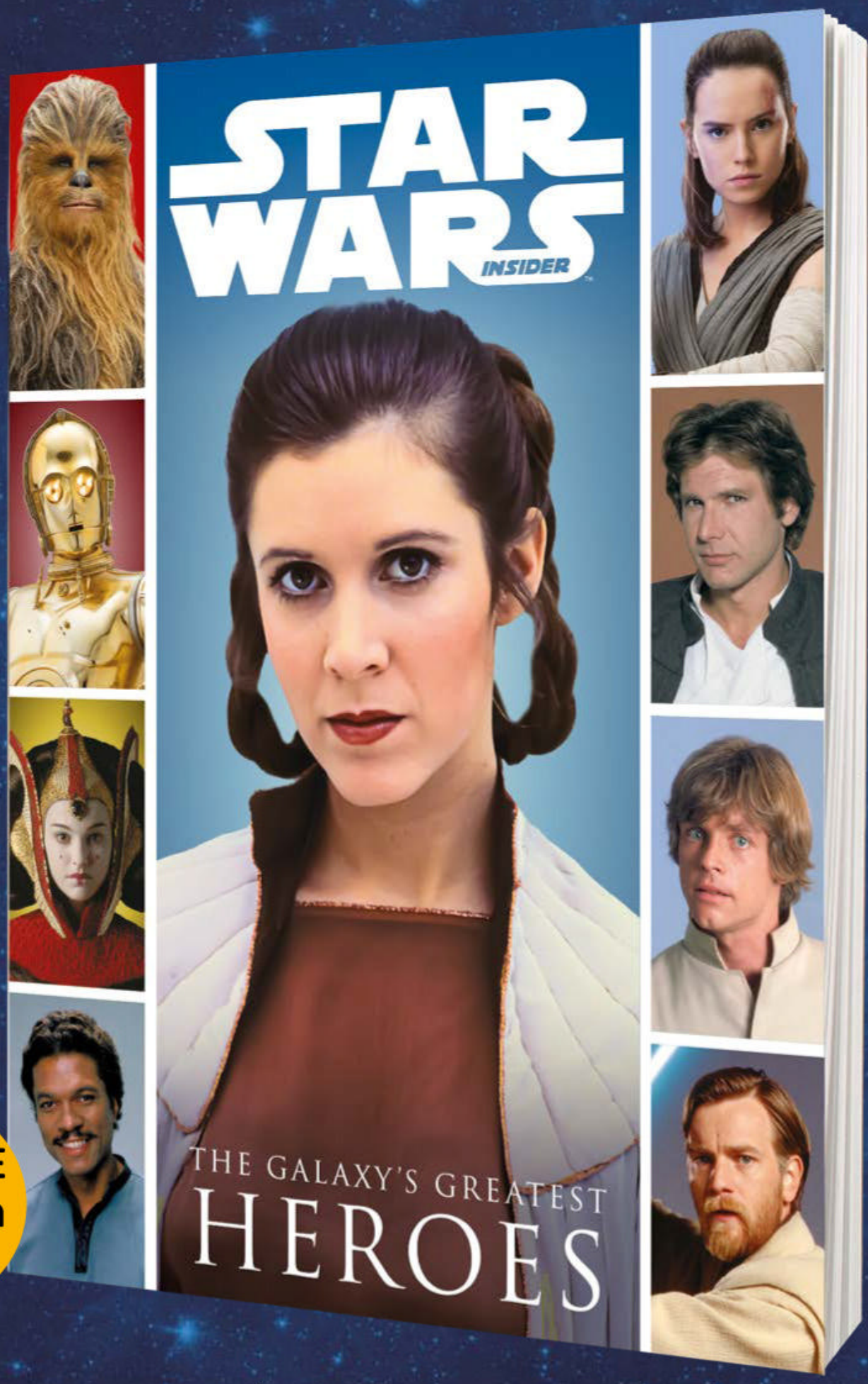
The Fallen Star
Writer: Claudia Gray
Del Rey, Adult novel

Mission to Disaster
Writer: Justina Ireland
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Middle grade novel

COMING SOON

Midnight Horizon
Writer: Daniel José Older
Disney Lucasfilm Press, Young adult novel
On Sale February 4

ICONS OF THE LIGHT SIDE.



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“We are the team that visualizes the big moments that really define the film.”

David Nakabayshi
Creative Director,
ILM art department

The Art of Effects

Inside Industrial Light & Magic’s VFX Art Department

WORDS: BRANDON WAINERDI

01 Luke and Leia train on Ajan Kloss. Art by Andrée Wallin and Adam Baines.

There is perhaps no greater legacy in filmmaking than that of Industrial Light & Magic. Since its humble beginnings in a Van Nuys warehouse in 1975, ILM has remained unparalleled among its industry peers, creating groundbreaking special effects and shepherding brand new technology, for nearly fifty years. And it was talented artists and designers like Ralph McQuarrie, Nilo Rodis-Jamero, and Joe Johnston who were some of the first to directly take the worlds of *Star Wars* from concept to screen.

The ILM Art Department is a direct carryover from their sketches and storyboards and, with its deep connections to filmmakers and visual effects teams, it has become an invaluable asset for any project, especially ones as visually daunting and exciting as new *Star Wars* adventures.

Continuing a Legacy

David Nakabayshi, affectionately nicknamed "Nak," has been creative director of the ILM art department since 2002, and is acutely aware of this legacy. As he explains: "VFX production started with Ralph, Joe, Nilo, and people like Dave Carson: they would do the artwork, help figure out the sequences, and then go on stage to get their hands and jeans dirty. And nothing has really changed for us since then."

During his nearly two-decade-long tenure leading the team, Nak has solidified the ILM art department's role during the production of a movie, from blue sky pre-production to the final tweaks of post-production. "We are the team that visualizes the big moments that really define the film, crafting very elaborate, focused concepts that look photorealistic, so the director and the studio can say, 'Okay, *that's* what it's going to look like,'" ▸

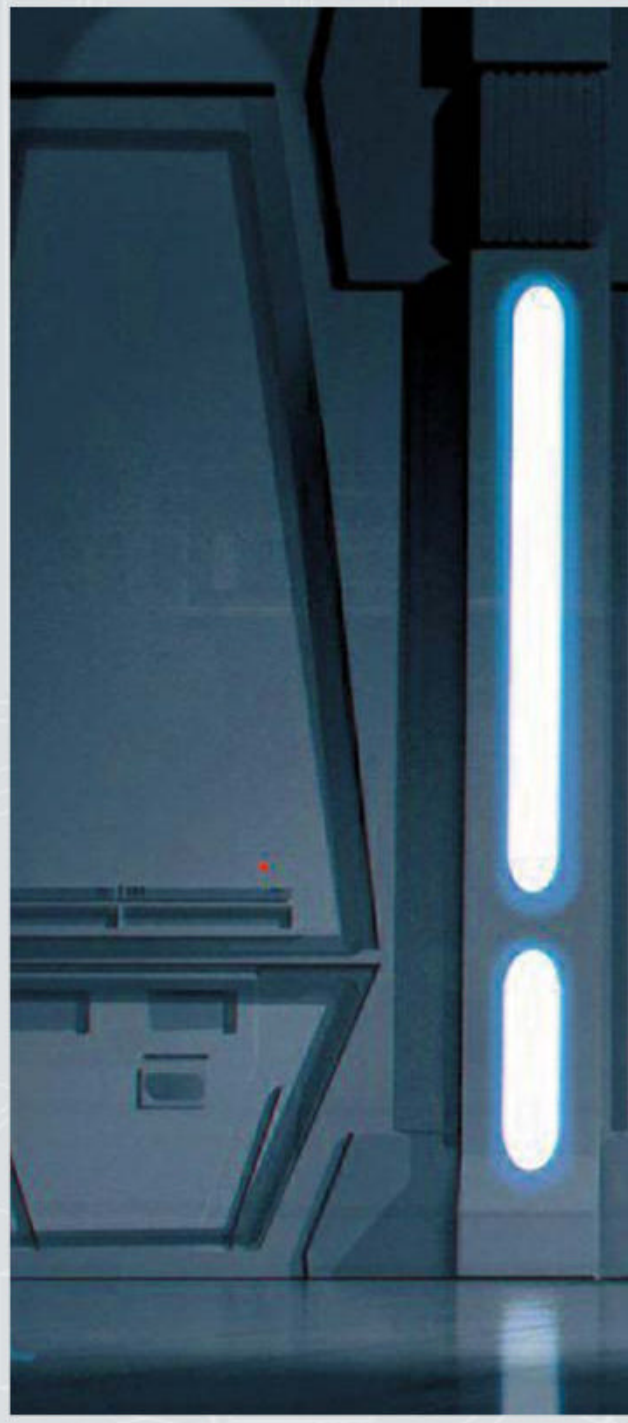
he explains. "You then get all kinds of feedback that needs to be addressed, and that is where the art department really shines. We're a fully fledged design studio and help filmmakers at the start of their movie, who don't have the bandwidth to hire production designers. So, we jump in and design their characters, creatures, and keyframes for their film, which is the fun, creative work."

Alex Jaeger, a senior visual effects art director on Nak's team, who has been at ILM since 1995, mentions something similar: "A lot of our tasks are now more focused on pre-production for projects. With the advent of streaming services, we help directors with short-term projects get their films off the ground, with a blast of art for three weeks that will receive a studio's greenlight. And, in those cases, we're not bound by production designers, it's just the writer and the director saying, 'Here are some ideas from the script, now work your magic.'"

The art department is a versatile, effective, and indispensable tool, often doing what Nak describes as "blue-collar work," also ideating further iterations of shots that aren't working out in the post-production phase. "Sometimes it's a simple paint over, but oftentimes it's reworking an older design that doesn't mesh with the now-filmed sequence," he says. "And that rework could be anything from a spaceship that needs more engines to a creature that the studio wants to have more teeth."

With the advent of StageCraft technology—a set made from high-definition LED screens, used to incredible effect during filming of *Star Wars: The Mandalorian* (2019-present)—pre-production and post-production needs have merged even closer together. "We now also have to do art way up front, really nailing down the entire look of the thing, so they can get onto that stage and shoot."

02



03

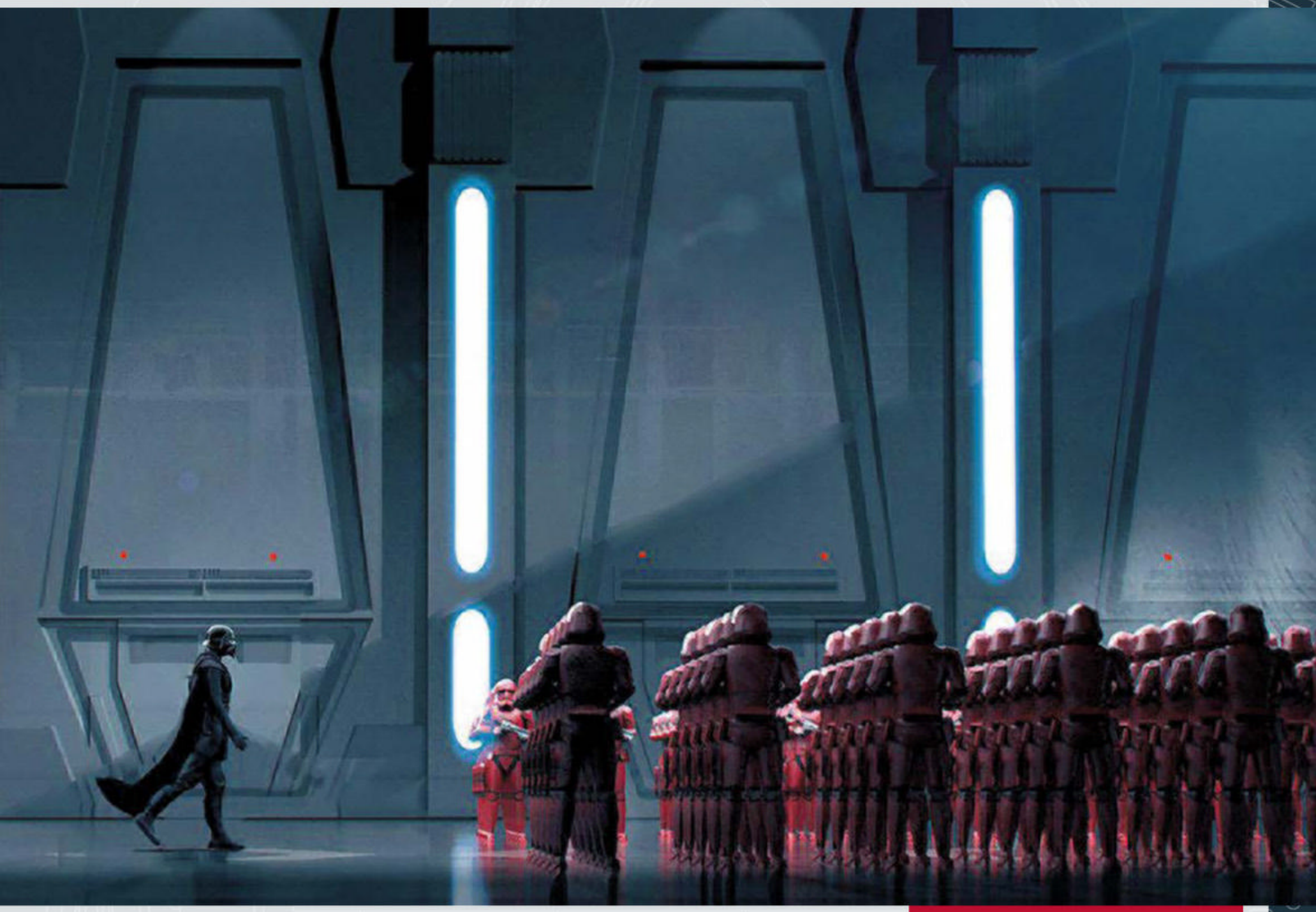
Jaeger explains, "It takes some work on the backend, but getting things finalized early really cuts down on their production time."

Strength in Numbers

Because of this wide range of design needs, the ILM art department team must be incredibly versatile, and is therefore comprised of an all-star list of industry veterans, many of whom have been working for Industrial Light & Magic, or various Lucasfilm subsidiaries, for years. Nak says, "We have a really strong senior level of experience in the department. Three of our art directors were production assistants at one point, coming in straight out of college. They just needed to have a lot of potential and a good eye and a good sense of design.

"The first two years in that job really gives us a sense whether someone can deliver, especially on a deadline. We then begin to figure out how they fit in, whether they're a very good creature person, or a good hard-surface model person. I always want people to play to their strengths. If you're a good painter, paint. If you're a good model person, use 3D tools and model. We use those innate skills to our advantage."

02 Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi duel in *Revenge of the Sith* (2005) concept art by Aaron McBride.



Aaron McBride, a senior visual effects art director who has been working for ILM since the prequels, agrees, "Nak approaches it like he's casting a movie, or setting a starting lineup. It is always a very collaborative process, so that we can best design something. You'll have someone working on a new creature, while someone else is concurrently working on a piece of keyframe art that features that creature. It's like an orchestra: you have the percussion, then the strings, and then the horn section. It's all timing."

Of course, the real key to the team's success is the incredible caliber of artists who comprise it. Each one of them has a unique skillset, with varying talents like ship design or a focus on planetary environments, but all bound by similar stories of early inspirations and a desire to create. McBride says, "We all grew up drawing anytime we could get our hands on a pencil. I saw *Star Wars* when I was 3 and I took it for reality. I assumed it was a real place and that it really happened. But, as I got older, something clicked and I realized that there were artistic decisions that were made while crafting this story, and that it was someone's job to make sure that a movie looks the way it does. I wanted that job. We all did."

Defining a New Galaxy

Most of the ILM art department's senior leadership are veterans of the *Star Wars* saga. Long before the sequel trilogy kicked off,

03 Concept art of a First Order hangar in *The Rise of Skywalker*, by Christian Alzman and James Clyne.

ARTISTS OF ILM

David Nakabayashi
Creative Director of the ILM art department since 2002

James Clyne
Lucasfilm Design Supervisor

Alex Jaeger
Senior Visual Effects Art Director

Aaron McBride
Senior Art Director / Concept Artist

Amy Beth Christenson Smith
Art Director

Chris Voy
Visual Effects Art Director

Stephen Zavala
Senior Concept Artist

18+

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they spent their early careers crafting iconic elements of classics like *Attack of the Clones* (2002), *Revenge of the Sith* (2005), *The Clone Wars* (2008-2014, 2020), and the videogame *Star Wars*: The Force Unleashed. These experiences were leading their way to kickstart the sequel trilogy and beyond.

Nak reminisces: "Seeing Alex Jaeger, Aaron McBride, and James Clyne's work on the prequels, especially Episodes II and III, really showed me that they were ready for this new challenge, and that they had really been looking for it all their lives. Within a month, we were up and running with a full art department for *The Force Awakens* (2015), while also growing globally, with some top-tier talent abroad."

"It was the opportunity of lifetime to work on *The Force Awakens*," Clyne, a design supervisor in the department, remembers, "We had the prequels, and we had the original films, but we now had to take a step forward and figure out where we should stand in terms of the aesthetic of this new era, thirty-something years after *Return of the Jedi* (1983). It was a lot of fun to figure that out.

"We were continually tasked with various issues, like designing a new Star Destroyer, or Lando Calrissian's *Millennium Falcon*, or just the hangars of the First Order," Clyne continues. "And it was the things that you thought were going to be the simplest that ended up becoming the most challenging. We wanted to mimic the *essence* of them, but to do something completely new. I ended up working on *The Force Awakens* for two and a half years, which I did not expect at all. Of course, it was an incredible learning experience, because I got to understand our entire pipeline."

04

04 *The Rise of Skywalker* concept art by Stephen Zavala.

05

05 The *Tantive IV* lifts off, in *The Rise of Skywalker* concept art by James Clyne.

Speaking to the strengths of the department and its team, Alex Jaeger was also able to work on some key elements of *The Force Awakens*, including the destruction of Starkiller Base during the movie's climax. He says, "Our role as the ILM art department is often to be fresh eyes on a project, like it was for Starkiller Base. If the filmmakers are stuck on something or they really need to come up with a new look, they'll immediately grab someone from the art department to help. Because I had worked on J.J. Abrams' *Star Trek* (2009), designing a black hole emerging from the inside of a planet, they asked if I could come up with a few new looks for Starkiller Base's implosion. That was a fun one for me to play around with."

"I think the greatest part for me, as a creative director, is seeing these artists step into their own, create something really unique, and then getting to see it on the big screen," says Nak. "It just blows me away and is something that I'm very proud of, in terms of who in the department has worked on *Star Wars*. All of them have contributed in some way to the galaxy."

MAKING THE KESSEL RUN
SOLO: A STAR WARS STORY (2018)

06

Aaron McBride, Senior Art Director:
"A movie can change a lot in post-production. They'll add a scene or a creature, something that can be added digitally, like the giant Maw creature in the Kessel Run sequence.

"Some of the initial ideas were that it was a giant jellyfish, an enormous squid, or a hammerhead shark with tentacles. I tried a bunch of different versions and we arrived at the one that was most like a jellyfish, but also had the mouth of a sea turtle and a bunch of trypophobic eyes."

07

"The *Millennium Falcon* goes through *a lot* during the Kessel Run."
Steven Savala
Senior Concept Artist

08

Steven Zavala, Senior Concept Artist
"The *Millennium Falcon* goes through *a lot* during the Kessel Run. Because of that, we had to build the digital *Falcon* in a very detailed way. I was in charge of figuring out how the engine would actually fit inside the ship without conflicting with the rest of the blueprint. We managed to build a 'working' cross-section that made sense within the story and when the ship was falling apart in the movie."

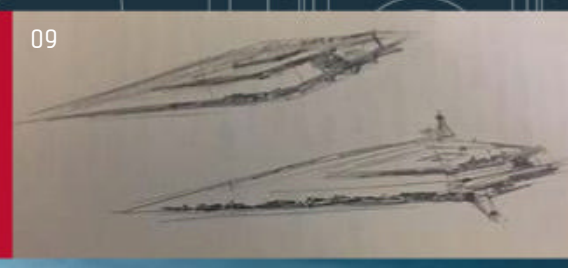
Chris Voy, Visual Effects Art Director
"One of the first things I worked on for the Kessel Run was making maps of the actual journey, whether they would fly through a bunch of ice and through a cave, or be surrounded by a storm. We played around with those ideas in a very visual way, to come up with as many interesting scenarios as we could, even calling back to the old *Star Tours* ride. What you see in the movie is a mix of our individual takes on different parts of the Run. Everything that ended up on screen had contributions from everyone in the department. It was really fun process."

06 Kessel run concept art by Aaron McBride.

07 The eye of the summa-verminoth, conceptualized by Aaron McBride.

08 "Into the Maw." *Solo* concept art by Chris Voy.

FIGHTING THE FINAL BATTLE
STAR WARS: THE RISE OF SKYWALKER (2019)


09

Stephen Zavala, Senior Concept Artist
"We knew the third act was going to have this massive fleet of ships, in a battle between the citizens of the galaxy and the Final Order. James Clyne and I developed the look of that fleet, and we're both proud of that work, because it was a lot of ships.

"We didn't do it in a vacuum: we had to talk with director J.J. Abrams, VFX supervisor Roger Guyett, and all of the animation leads. What was especially cool was working with people who didn't necessarily have an artistic background, because they were able to present a very different point of view which informed it all in a more interesting way."

10

James Clyne, Lucasfilm Design Supervisor
"It was such a daunting task. On the previous *Star Wars* films that I had worked on, we would design and build maybe half a dozen new ships. Here, we were tasked with literally *thousands* of individual ships that needed to be put on screen. We designed them in such a way that we could digitally kitbash them and turn one design into twelve. There was *a lot* of pressure. But we kind of thrive in that environment because that's where you can get really creative."

11

"There was *a lot* of pressure. But we kind of thrive in that environment because that's where you can get really creative."
James Clyne, Lucasfilm Design Supervisor

12

Amy Beth Christenson Smith, Art Director
"I think it's the highlight of my whole career. *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) was the first movie I ever saw, and here I was, getting to work on the final episode, all those years later.

"The work itself involved a lot of stuff that was new to me. It was super nerdy, but so much fun. It was really mind-blowing."

09 Star Destroyer sketches by James Clyne.

10 The Battle of Exegol, as seen on-screen in *The Rise of Skywalker* (2019).

11 Concept art of the *Steadfast* by James Clyne.

12 Exegol concept art by James Clyne.

13

The Future

By constantly working on this bleeding edge of technology, however, the ILM art department always needs to be cognizant of rapid changes in the industry. Nak says, "About ten years ago, we started to see that you don't have to draw *everything* with a pencil, pen, and markers, because the tool set had become three-dimensional. I would now say that a large component of our concept art is done in 3D, which is probably the best link to the StageCraft platform.

"I also think we're already seeing the next push happen. We're working within real-time engines, like Unreal, and actually doing conceptual artwork in that platform. By building environments in Unreal and in 3D, and then showing them to directors, we can fly them around and create quick design animations. So now, instead of just a piece of static concept art, it's almost a slow camera move, like how the director would see it in the context of their shot. We are addressing this new medium for visual effects, and it's actually all based in videogame technology."

Clyne adds, "What's great is that technology continues to evolve, and it just doesn't stop. Because of that, ILM needs to regularly push the limits of creating tools that allow us to tell better stories. For instance, we now regularly use virtual reality. We call it 'the scout,' and put on VR goggles, so we can see a set or a vehicle, walk around it and understand it from a 1:1-scale point of view. But these are all just tools that support the actual photography shot on a set. I think the more ways we try different things, the more we're going to be able to immerse the audience," Clyne continues. "When all of these tools are working together, whether that's VR or StageCraft or whatever comes next, the viewer really doesn't understand what's real, and what's fake. And I think that's the ultimate goal."

ILM and its incredible art department continue to push boundaries and create new tools to better tell their stories, because it's intrinsic to the company's DNA.

"When I was a kid, I didn't know anything about filmmaking." Clyne says, "But I quickly started to understand the difference between movies with ILM visual effects, compared to movies with non-ILM visual effects. There was an inherent *look*, a quality that was just so much better than everybody else's. And because those artists had a very distinctive look and a very distinctive point of view, it really set Industrial Light & Magic apart for me. I hope we are continuing in that tradition."

13 Filming *The Mandalorian* (2019-present) using ILM's StageCraft technology.

14 Director Rick Famuyiwa in front of a wall of the Volume's LED screens.

14

BO-KATAN KRYZE: LEADER IN WAITING

The story of the Mandalorian warrior's quest to rule her people.

WORDS: KRISTIN BAVER

Bo-Katan Kryze was a complex anti-hero and a conflicted warrior who was dedicated to her homeworld of Mandalore and its people, yet often at odds with those who sat on its throne. Even after the Empire allegedly turned her planet to glass, Bo-Katan remained steadfast in her mission to wield the Darksaber and retake her place as the rightful leader of Mandalore.

Star Wars Insider **traces her story to discover how the heir of the Kryze line proves that morality and loyalty separates true heroes from savages and greedy outlaws.**

Born on Mandalore, little is known of Bo-Katan's formative years, but she came to align herself with the world's ancient warrior culture. Wearing armor that was hundreds of years old, forged in battle, bathed in blood, and rich in history, the stoic Bo-Katan wore a helmet of white and blue, with the symbol of her elite fighters, the Nite Owls, emblazoned on the forehead.

In the time of the Clone Wars, her sister the Duchess Satine Kryze ruled their home with a pacifistic agenda, maintaining peace by remaining neutral in the conflict sweeping the galaxy. In stark contrast, Bo-Katan aligned with a terrorist cell known as Death Watch, a dedicated group of soldiers banished to the moon of Concordia and intent on restoring ▸

01 Bo-Katan Kryze was portrayed by Katee Sackhoff in *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (2008-2014, 2020), *Star Wars Rebels* (2014-2018), and *The Mandalorian* (2019-present).

02

"A HEADSTRONG REBEL WITH AN EGO TO MATCH HER DETERMINATION, THE YOUNG BO-KATAN SIMPLY DID NOT SEE HERSELF AS A LEADER."

02 Bo-Katan's costume in *The Mandalorian* was a close match for its animated precursor.

03 Mandalorians Bo-Katan Kryze and Sabine Wren, in the *Rebels* episode "Heroes of Mandalore Part 2". ▶

Mandalore to a state that more closely resembled its cultural past. A headstrong rebel with an ego to match her determination, the young Bo-Katan simply did not see herself as a leader. "She's always reserved that for her sister [the Duchess Satine], for the diplomats and the politicians," Katee Sackhoff, who has played the character for more than a decade, has said. "She was the warrior."

For years, Bo-Katan worked closely with Death Watch leader Pre Vizsla, her signature double Westar 35 pistols and her Nite Owls in his service. As his trusted lieutenant, Bo-Katan was loyal to the cause above all else, including her own family. Bo-Katan was instrumental in the rescue of Maul and Savage Opress, and helping Vizsla and the two brothers to create the Shadow Collective, a united front that brought together underworld gangs like the Black Sun, the Pyke Syndicate, and the Hutt clan. Blinded by her beliefs and ambitions, Bo-Katan went along with a planned attack on Mandalore engineered to allow Death Watch to intercede and save the day, seemingly proving that her sister's form of governing had failed.

03

But the alliance with the former Sith Lord Maul resulted in a power-grab, and after Pre Vizsla betrayed the Zabrak, Maul decapitated him in his throne room. While most of the Mandalorian warriors in Death Watch pledged their allegiance to Maul, who now wielded the Darksaber and the right to rule according to ancient custom and tradition, the sight of an outsider controlling her world disgusted and horrified Bo-Katan. In a turning point for the warrior, Bo-Katan refused to yield and was forced to flee, as she and her Nite Owls were labelled traitors.

A Reluctant Ruler

Mandalore's longstanding neutrality prevented the Republic from intervening overtly even as Maul and the crime syndicates he controlled seized the throne. But with the Battle of Mandalore raging and Kenobi rushing back to the Republic, Bo-Katan's survival instincts drove her and her allies in Clan Wren to forge an alliance with Ahsoka Tano, after Anakin Skywalker's former Padawan had walked away from the Jedi Order. Together, they mounted a siege to take back Mandalore and approached Kenobi and the Republic for reinforcements. With the help of half of the 501st Legion led by the newly promoted Commander Rex, Bo-Katan returned to fight for her people in the siege. But she quickly learned that she had played into Maul's hands, a trap of his making that would bring the Jedi within his grasp. And just as Prime Minister Almec was about to reveal the machinations in play—Maul's quest to bring Kenobi and Skywalker to Mandalore—Almec was assassinated before Bo-Katan's eyes by Gar Saxon, a Mandalorian loyal to Maul.

Clan Saxon and Clan Kryze remained at odds for years to come. Thanks to Ahsoka Tano, Maul was ultimately captured and ferried back to Coruscant for justice to be served and Bo-Katan and her faction regained control, apprehending Saxon and his loyal followers. In the waning hours of the war, the Jedi named Bo-Katan as the regent to the Republic, but her service was short-lived. After Order 66 eliminated most Jedi and ended the Clone Wars, Bo-Katan found herself once more at odds with the newly installed government, refusing to obey the Emperor and his regime. She was betrayed by the Saxon clan who rose to power, forcing Bo-Katan into exile once more.

Bo-Katan's life during the long stretch of the Empire's prominence remains shrouded in mystery. But nearly 20 years later, just as the Galactic Civil War was on the cusp of breaking out, Mistress ▸

04 Bo-Katan teamed up with former Jedi Ahsoka Tano to liberate Mandalore from under Maul's rule.

THE DARKSABER

In the days long before the High Republic, the Mandalorian Tarre Vizsla was the first of his kind to join the Jedi Order, forging the Darksaber, a weapon which become the symbol of power held by the rightful ruler of Mandalore. At some point, the Jedi and the Mandalorians no longer saw eye to eye, yet the black-bladed saber remained essential to maintaining order and power on the planet for generations to come. A potent symbol of power, pride, and history, the Darksaber had to be won in combat to be carried by the rightful ruler of Mandalore.

05

THE SISTERS KRYZE

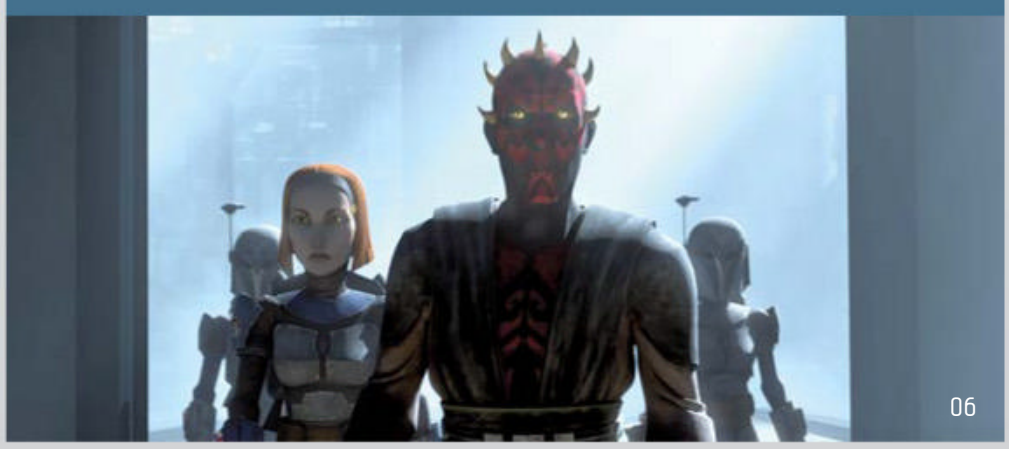
To paraphrase Ahsoka Tano, Duchess Satine Kryze and her sister Bo-Katan were nothing alike. One was a regal and benevolent ruler, longtime friend of the Jedi Obi-Wan Kenobi, dedicated to peaceful solutions even in a time of war. The other was hardened by battle, with a brusque manner of speaking that sounded like a growl, a no-nonsense survivor with no time for decorum and diplomacy. Bo-Katan never understood Satine's idealism; and Satine, in turn, never understood her sister's devotion to the perceived honor of the old ways.

It was clear that although the sisters' beliefs clashed, they were looking for the same outcome: a strong, independent Mandalore with a leader who would look after the needs of the people of their world. Polar opposites in almost every way, ultimately they were reunited by another's betrayal.

An organized attack from Maul and the various underworld crime syndicates made it appear that pacifistic rule had made Mandalore weak, an opening for Pre Vizsla and the Death Watch to succeed in returning Mandalore to its warrior ways in the name of defense for a fabricated attack. With the people on the side of Death Watch, Satine was removed from her throne and imprisoned, while those who stole her power used lies to cast her as the villain. Bo-Katan stood by as her sister was blamed for abandoning her post and her people, yet she could not continue to ally herself with Maul after he installed his puppet Prime Minister Almec and blamed Vizsla's murder on—of all people—the gentle Satine.

Instead of battling each other, the corruption of Bo-Katan's strict code of honor gave the sisters a common foe. Or, as Bo-Katan put it: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." Bo-Katan twice risked her life to free her sister from prison, first so Satine could get an urgent message to Obi-Wan Kenobi before she was recaptured, and later acting as reinforcements for the Jedi as he infiltrated the prison to free the woman who loved him.

But the reunion of the House of Kryze was short-lived when Satine was brutally murdered by Maul to make Kenobi suffer. Despite her grief, Bo-Katan soldiered on. She infiltrated the prison system once more to help Kenobi escape captivity and prepared to take back her world in the name of Clan Kryze.



06

Bo-Katan the traitor still loomed large in the minds of her people, who believed her to be their true leader. Fighting alongside a rebel cell that included Mandalorian artist Sabine Wren, Bo-Katan was reunited with the Darksaber. However, initially, she refused to take up the mantle as the ruler of Mandalore. "I had my chance to rule and I failed," she told Wren. "I am not my sister. I am not the leader you seek."

But it wasn't long before Bo-Katan had a change of heart. "The Duchess," a brutal weapon of Wren's creation named for Satine and capable of targeting Mandalorian armor to turn the beskar that had protected generations of warriors to ash, proved that Bo-Katan could not outrun her destiny. If she refused to unite the clans of Mandalore, the Imperials would destroy them one by one, and she could not deny that Mandalorians were always strongest together.

Her world in ruins, a lifeless planet of smoking debris, Bo-Katan proved to be a leader whose cooler head prevailed even when the Empire threatened to annihilate all of her people, turning their sacred armor and all it stood for against the warrior race. Brought to her knees herself by "The Duchess," Lady Kryze survived to come back even stronger. As Wren prepared to turn the weapon against the Empire by targetting the armor of

05 Bo-Katan came to the aid of Obi-Wan Kenobi after Maul brutally murdered her sister, Satine.

06 Her alliance with Maul proved to be an unwise move for Bo-Katan.

08

"BO-KATAN'S DESTINY REMAINED TIED TO THE DARKSABER, WHICH WAS LAST SEEN IN DIN DJARIN'S RIGHTFUL OWNERSHIP AFTER HE DEFEATED GIDEON IN BATTLE."

Imperial stormtroopers, Bo-Katan appealed to her sense of honor and persuaded the young rebel to reconsider. Together they destroyed the abomination of a device.

Everything Bo-Katan did, she did for her people, her planet, and "For Mandalore." It was Bo-Katan, holding the Darksaber aloft and pledging her allegiance, who brought her people together. "I accept this sword for my sister, for my clan, and for all of Mandalore," she promised, finally uniting the disparate houses.

The New Republic

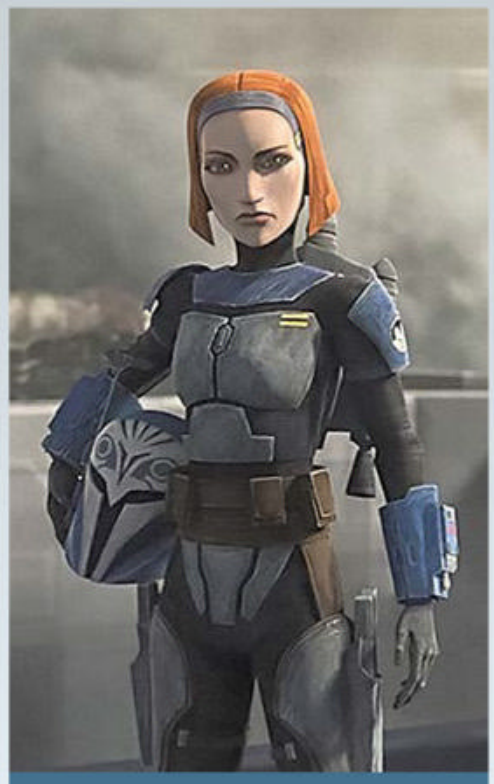
However, by the time the Empire fell and the New Republic was in its formative years, Bo-Katan had lost custody of the weapon once more and it fell into the hands of Imperial Remnant Moff Gideon. Living in exile, Bo-Katan and a small contingent of fighters set up operations on the black market haven of Trask, stealing the needed supplies to take back Mandalore and protecting their own. On the watery moon they first met the bounty hunting Mandalorian Din Djarin and his tiny charge, Grogu, saving the pair from a boatload of nefarious Quarren who intended to kill Djarin and take his beskar armor.

A child of the Watch, a splinter sect that took the Death Watch's beliefs a step further to return to the most archaic Mandalorian customs including refusing to show one's face, Din Djarin and Bo-Katan were not easy allies. But by trading information—in the years after the Siege of Mandalore, Bo-Katan had maintained intel on Ahsoka Tano's whereabouts, a valuable piece of information on Djarin's quest to return the child to the Jedi—Bo-Katan was able to secure Djarin's help in claiming a cargo hold of weapons and an entire ship under the command of the Imperials still answering to Gideon.

07

07 Living in exile on Trask, Bo-Katan and her small group of warriors encountered another Mandalorian with his own mission.

08 Bo-Katan helped Din Djarin rescue his friend Grogu from the Imperial Remnant.



BEHIND THE SCENES

Bo-Katan Kryze is one of a handful of characters to transition from the world of animation to live-action in *Star Wars* storytelling, with a single actor portraying her in the recording booth and in front of the camera. Known for strong, complex characters, the actor Katee Sackhoff first voiced Bo-Katan in the 2012 episode of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, "A Friend in Need," working alongside future *The Mandalorian* collaborators Jon Favreau, who voiced Pre Vizsla, and director Dave Filoni.

Bo-Katan's destiny remained tied to the Darksaber, which was last seen in Din Djarin's rightful ownership after he defeated Gideon in battle. Although Djarin had tried to return the weapon to Bo-Katan, as Sabine Wren had before him, her adherence to honor precluded her from accepting his submission without a fair fight to claim the prize in victory. The destiny of Bo-Katan Kryze and her homeworld is yet to be written, but it seems clear that the leader in waiting is unlikely to relinquish her quest to resurrect Mandalore, with the Darksaber or without.

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

The acclaimed British actor Dame Harriet Walter reveals how she was cast as Doctor Harter Kalonia in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015), and why the saga is part of the family business.

WORDS: MARK NEWBOLD

The Force Awakens introduced movie audiences to a host of new characters, including a Resistance medic who saw to a wound sustained by the mighty Wookiee, Chewbacca. Played by Dame Harriet Walter, Doctor Harter Kalonia's bedside manner clearly won the Wookiee's heart, and ours too. The multi-award-winning actor recently sat down with *Star Wars Insider* to discuss her scene in the movie, and her family's connection to the galaxy far, far, away.

***Star Wars Insider*: How did your role in *The Force Awakens* come about?**

Dame Harriet Walter: I was doing a radio play and I was asked to do an audition. I didn't know what the job was for, and I wasn't given a script. When I got there, I had to sign a non-disclosure agreement and had to learn a great chunk of text, quite technical stuff, but it was obvious it wasn't going to be in the show. It was just for the producers to get a feel for what I could do. I almost forgot about it, because I didn't know what it was for, and I went back to my radio play.

Maybe four or five weeks later my agent said, "Do you remember that audition you did? Well, J.J. Abrams wants you to be in *Star Wars*. He hasn't got a role for you yet, but he definitely wants you to be in it."

Had that ever happened to you before?

It had never happened, no. I suppose it's part of modern-day life, what with social media. You have to keep these kinds of things very, very private. I understand it, but it was a shame I couldn't tell my mates, "Whoopee, I'm in *Star Wars*!" (*Laughs*).

At what point did you learn what the role would be?

I was off doing other jobs, and then I was asked if I would I go to Pinewood Studios for my costume fitting, which was when I found out I was going to be in the Resistance. They gave me my one line of dialogue, but I still didn't know who I would be speaking it to. I had three words: "You're most welcome." I thought, "Why have they bothered getting me in for *that*? I've played Cleopatra!" (*Laughs*).

When the costume designer took me to meet J.J. he said, "I've got to get you something else to do. I've got to give you more lines. I've got to give you more fun!"

So, when I went in to shoot my scene the following week, my lines weren't actually written down. J.J. threw lots of different variations at me, prompting me with, "Now say this, now say that, now say the other," and then he picked which one he wanted. I did all sorts of versions. "Oh, that sounds *scary*," or "You did *terribly* well," or "You're *very* brave!"

The thing is, I didn't know the rest of the story, so it wasn't until I saw the film that I realized, "Oh, so that's what I was doing!"

Did you perform with both Chewbacca actors?

I did the scene twice over, once with Peter Mayhew and once with Joonas Suotamo. Then J.J. asked me to stick around, as he thought I might be needed for another scene. They eventually called me back on another day to shoot the scene that's in the DVD extras, ▸

"MY AGENT SAID, 'DO YOU REMEMBER THAT AUDITION YOU DID? WELL, J.J. ABRAMS WANTS YOU TO BE IN *STAR WARS*.'"

01

where I tell Rey (Daisy Ridley) that she can see Finn (John Boyega).

Your uncle was Sir Christopher Lee, who played Count Dooku in *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* (2002) and *Revenge of the Sith* (2005). Did you share the news of your role with him?
I told him, of course! Despite his age, he still had this wonderful attitude of being like a teenage boy, so everything was still exciting to him.

We were quite close, as he was always coming and going when I was a kid growing up. Of course, he'd done decades of work compared to me, but what was great was that bit by bit our careers moved more and more towards one anothers. He was quite a romantic uncle to have. Even though he was a really big film star, he was still my uncle, and as I got older it was more like being a fellow actor. What a pity we couldn't have been in a show together, but it never happened. His general attitude was always about being courteous, being well-behaved on set, and not letting the character bleed into his real life.

01 Harriet Walter shot her scene twice, with both Peter Mayhew and Joonas Suotamo in the role of Chewbacca.

Which was quite fortunate, given he played the likes of Count Dracula!
Yes, exactly! (*Laughs*)

Was there ever an opportunity for Doctor Kalonia to return in the later sequels?
No, that was it, although I did think, "Come on Chewbacca, get another wound!" I would have liked to have been the sort of character

02 Doctor Kalonia's brief scene was most memorable for her flirtatious bedside manner with the famous Wookiee hero.

"I THOUGHT JOHN BOYEGA AND DAISY RIDLEY WERE BRILLIANT."

who was the go-to physician. Wouldn't that have been good?! I could have been the general doctor on the base. It would be great to be like Q, the James Bond character who makes the gadgets. I could fix all the creatures! (*Laughs*)

What were your biggest takeaways from your *Star Wars* experience?

I thought John Boyega and Daisy Ridley were brilliant. I'd worked with John on *Law and Order: UK* (in the Season Six episode "Survivor's Guilt"). I thought he'd go far. And I thought Daisy did a beautiful job. Also, how great J.J. Abrams was. He's so creative, 24/7, and his energy was so extraordinary. You can get directors who look tired and feel tired and make you feel like you're a burden to them, but J.J. just made you feel enthusiastic all the time. I thought that was such an achievement, given the weight of expectation that must have been on his shoulders.

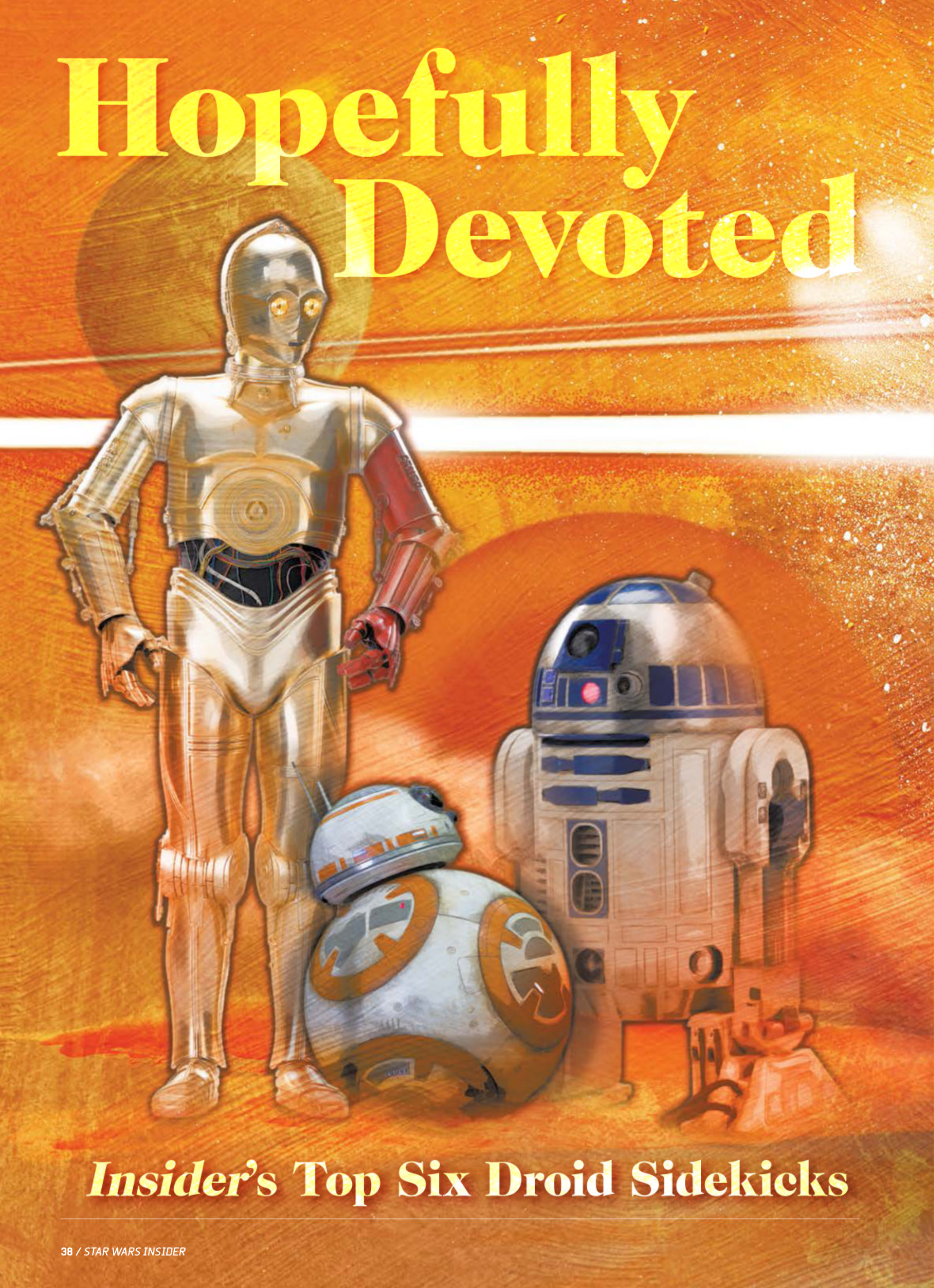
So that was my main takeaway, the talent that I was surrounded with. And that was my little *Star Wars* adventure. I'm only on screen for seven seconds, but it was such an honour.

CONNECTED TO THE COUNT

Dame Harriet Walter's uncle, Sir Christopher Lee (Count Dooku), was best known for his roles in horror movies, most famously playing the vampire Count Dracula. His portrayal of Frankenstein's monster in Hammer Film's *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957) has a connection with Walter's own acting career, as she starred as Mary Wollstonecroft—the mother of *Frankenstein* author Mary Shelley—in the TV movie *Frankenstein: Birth of a Monster* (2003).

02

Hopefully Devoted



Insider's Top Six Droid Sidekicks

From an astromech and its counterpart to a self-made first mate, droid sidekicks have enriched *Star Wars* adventures wherever in the galaxy they are found. *Insider* looks at six of our favorite mechanical pals.

WORDS: JAMES CLARKE

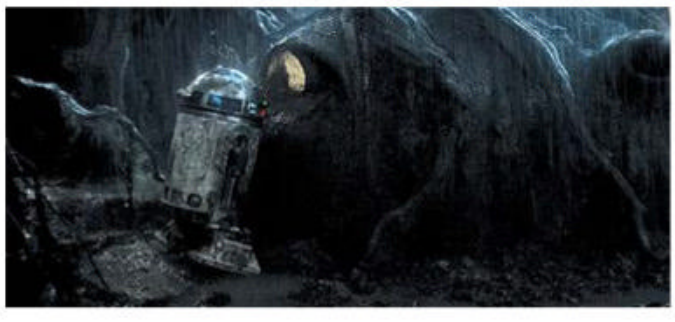
Did you smile when R2-D2 rolled up behind Luke Skywalker in the Season Two finale of *The Mandalorian* (2019-present)? Or when Poe Dameron gave BB-8's tummy a tickle when they were reunited in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017)? Moments like these say such a great deal about the place that some special droids occupy in the galaxy far, far away. The sidekick droid is the constant companion and friend across the stars, embodying so much that is good and proper in a *Star Wars* adventure.

Droid sidekicks often help their organic friends keep a check on reality (C-3PO quoting the odds!), or even gently nudge their moral focus in the right direction (as R2-D2 did for Luke on Ahch-To). The *Star Wars* galaxy is a place where harmony can be found in friendships that transcend differences, and as the saga has expanded in a myriad of new directions, the droid sidekick has remained a trusty constant.

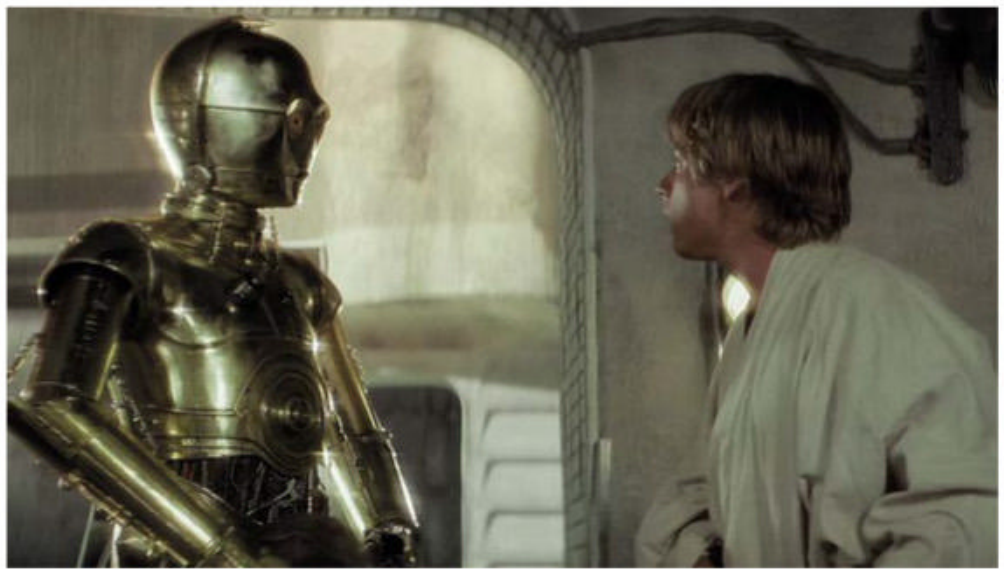
Let's begin with the foundational droid sidekick relationship: that of the reliable astromech R2-D2, his fussy counterpart C-3PO, and their master, Luke Skywalker. It's the relationship that defined how *Star Wars* heroes and their mechanical companions would interact, and provided audiences with relatable proxies to help introduce us to the wildness of George Lucas' space fantasy in *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977).

Intriguingly, "master" Luke was very quick to cast aside any notions of being called "sir," as he set to work cleaning the newly acquired droids in his garage on Tatooine. C-3PO, by nature, is a far more subservient character than the subversive R2-D2, and Luke's down to earth persona ("just Luke") sits in amusing contrast to the protocol droid's formal approach. Critically, C-3PO—for all his decorum—also speaks his mind to those he most cares about. Anthony Daniels, who has portrayed the droid for more than 44 years, once made the point that C-3PO, "has no restraint, no filter at all." Arguably, R2-D2 has even less filter, and it is perhaps fortunate that he only speaks in a series of bleeps, whirrs, and whistles.

As a talkative, eloquent droid, one of C-3PO's most brilliant moments is when he demonstrates his storytelling flair to a hut full of rapt Ewoks and their children in *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* (1983). One of the charms of the moment is that it demonstrates how highly C-3PO regards the human friends that he adventures with.



Even more than C-3PO, R2-D2 is at Luke's side in all weathers, and in all kinds of terrifying and wonderful situations! Consider, too, just how human the plucky astromech seems when he elevates himself to peer through the window of Yoda's home on a stormy Dagobah night.

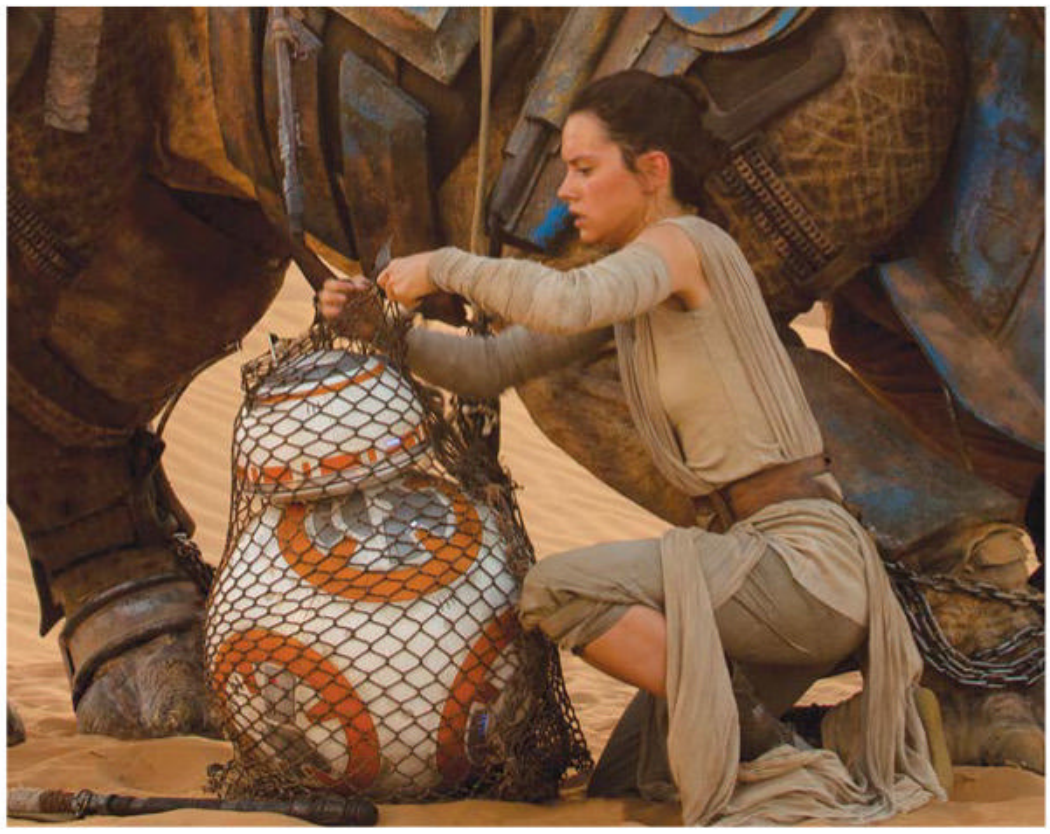


03

BB-8

That wistful shot of a lonely R2-D2 in the Dagobah rain was echoed in the initial encounter between BB-8 and Rey in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015). As Rey came to the droid's assistance, BB-8 asserted himself in a way that echoed the always chirpy persona of R2-D2, and marked an instant rapport between the two characters.

Daisy Ridley, who portrayed Rey, said of the relationship, "She instinctively saved BB-8 from the scavenger, didn't think anything of it. But when the droid looked into her eyes… I don't think *anyone* had ever looked at her that way before. From that point on they had a special bond. He was her talisman, the first constant in Rey's life."



When Rey attends to BB-8 and fixes his bent antenna, it's a gesture of care; and in that moment a bond was forged—despite Rey's insisting to the little droid, "Don't follow me!" Like a toddler who needs the company, BB-8 did so regardless, and Rey clearly sensed something special about the droid: so much so that she didn't sell him to Unkar Plutt—a choice that speaks volumes. The droids of *Star Wars* are often the empathic heart of the saga, and we adore them because of that. They can seem more human than human, as when Finn tells BB-8 that, "Poe didn't make it." Our hearts sink as low as BB-8's dome and we feel the droid's sadness. Who wouldn't want to give his tummy a tickle to cheer him up? ▸

"Droid sidekicks have found their place in families forged in dark times across the galaxy."

LESS MACHINE THAN MAN

George Lucas explained why he placed droids at the heart of his space fantasy in the book *Star Wars: The Annotated Screenplays*: "Having machines, like the droids, that are reasonably compassionate, and a man like Vader who becomes a machine and loses his compassion, was a theme that interested me."

04

CHOPPER (C1-10P)

In a way, the relationship between organic lifeforms and droids is an expression of the interconnectedness that the Force channels and nurtures, even though we've yet to encounter a Force-sensitive droid.

Droid sidekicks have found their place in families forged in dark times across the galaxy. This sense of family is front and center in the animated series *Star Wars Rebels* (2014-2018).

In the development of *Rebels*, Dave Filoni noted of Chopper that, "He likes to do the things the way he wants. If R2-D2 is the family dog, Chopper is the cat."

Chopper could be playful, cheeky, and rather grumpy, too, but like BB-8 there were evidently emotional responses in his programming. Consider the Season One episode "Rebel Resolve," in which the *Ghost* crew discovered that Kanan Jarrus had been captured by the Empire. After arguing with Hera, Ezra ran into a forlorn Chopper and gave the droid a pep talk that turned his wistful buzzes into hopeful beeps, revived at the prospect of setting out to find and liberate their friend.

05
BD-1

The droid sidekick in *Star Wars*, then, is a steadfast ally but also often comes to the fore as a protector, and this quality is key to the tiny droid companion of *Star Wars*: Jedi: Fallen Order hero, Cal Kestis, who undertakes a series of missions in the videogame accompanied by the energetic and resourceful BD-1.

BD-1 extended the familiar and enchanting *Star Wars* tradition of friendship between people and droids beyond anything we had seen before. Just like Rey and Luke, Cal was a lonely working-class hero with the weight of the galaxy on his mind. His droid sidekick was imperfect, quirky, and had an urge to collect data in a way that reflects our own 21st century obsessions. In other words, like humans, they had points of connection in personality. There was also a symbiotic nature to their relationship within the mechanics of the game, as neither could reach its conclusion without the other!

BD-1's programming embodied the best of human attributes, such as loyalty and a compulsion to protect his friend. BD-1 was always looking out for Cal, and Cal was reliant on BD-1's support, which was exemplified in the non-verbal bond between them. Without each other, they would never have completed their mission.

DROID NOMENCLATURE

Droid names tend to have a playful, tuneful quality about them, and there's a reason for that. When devising names for his characters while developing *A New Hope* (1977), George Lucas would try out character names by saying them aloud. If they were hard for Lucas to pronounce then he'd pick a new name that was easier on the ear.

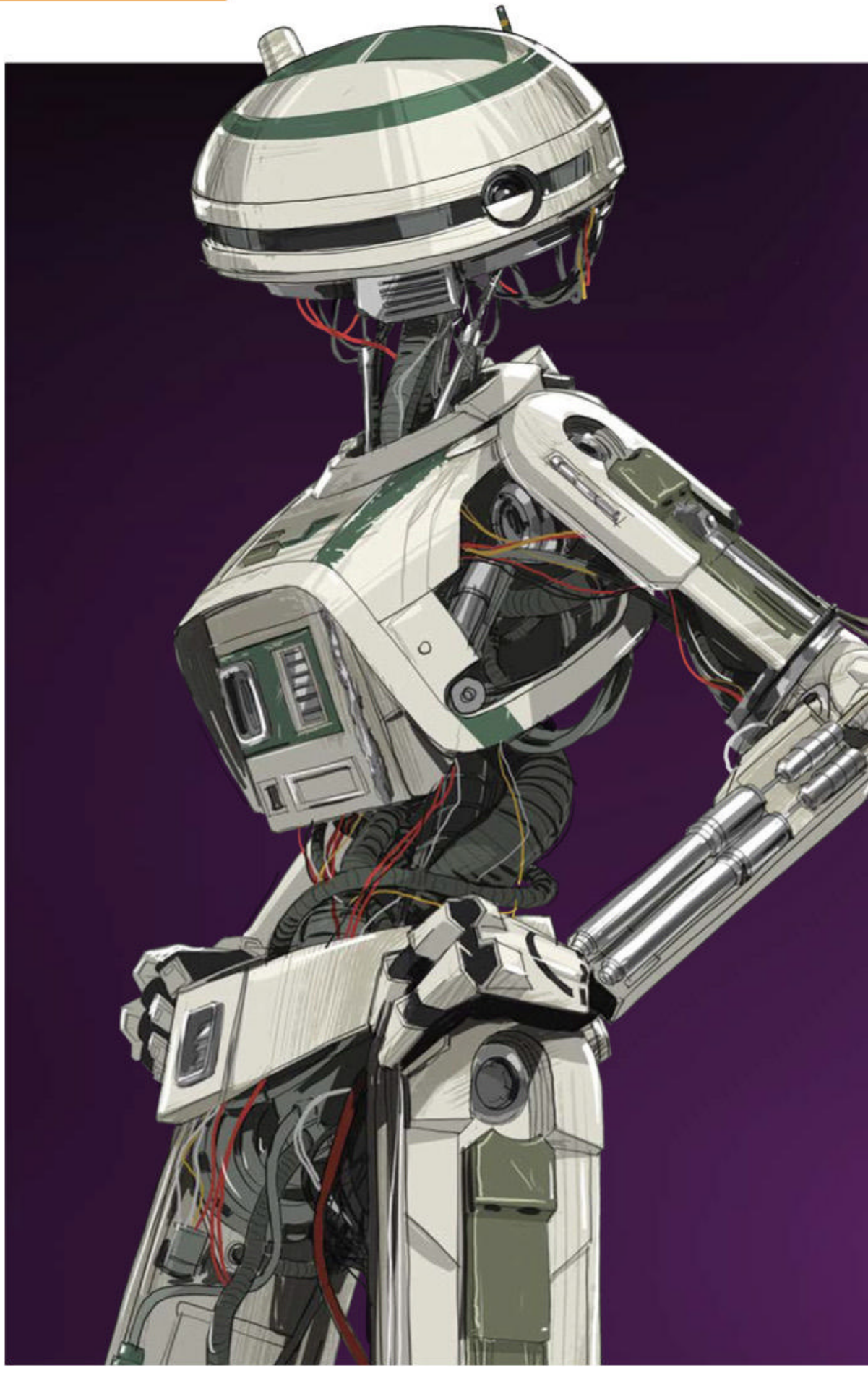
06

L3-37

Of all the rebellious droid sidekicks of the *Star Wars* galaxy, one was never backwards in coming forwards to express their opinions. In *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (2018), L3-37 was something quite different, a droid who was far from a mechanical servant and ever-ready to engage in political resistance. With her deeply held belief in droid rights, L3-37 tapped into the etymological history of the word robot, which has roots in various Slavic languages, such as the Czech word "robota," meaning "serf labor."

L3-37 and Lando Calrissian enjoyed a relationship that was marked by an almost constant verbal match of wits. She teased Lando, deflating his ego as all good sidekicks should, but the droid was more than just a foil to Calrissian. For all of the jokiness between the pair, when Calrissian cradled the broken L3 in his arms after she led a robot uprising on Kessel, it was a truly moving moment.

That L3 eventually became the navicomputer of the *Millennium Falcon*—essentially the starship's heart and soul—reminds us how quickly we invest technology with human value and significance. In discussing L3, Jon Kasdan, co-screenwriter of *Solo*, explained that, "She isn't subservient. L3 is subservient to no one, which is a fun kind of droid to write."



TRIPLE-ZERO AND BEETEE-ONE

Not all droid sidekicks are beneficent. When it comes to Doctor Aphra's droid compadres, Triple-Zero and Beetee-One, we were faced with something quite different.

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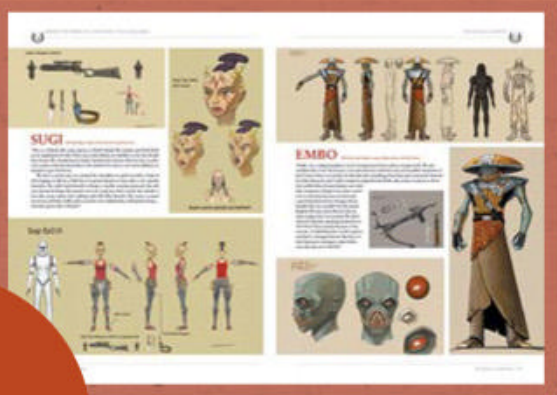

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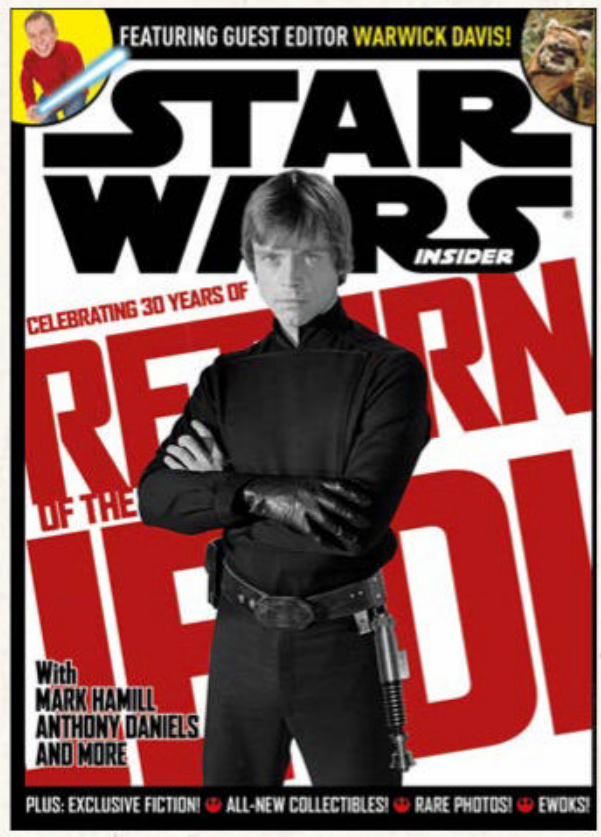
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An Echo Down The Years

Echo started out as an underdog, ascending to the elite rank of ARC trooper before losing everything to the Separatists. Later, as a member of the Bad Batch during the rise of the Empire, he and his siblings-in-arms found themselves fighting for survival in a galaxy that no longer had a place for them. *Star Wars Insider* traces the ups and downs of this singular soldier's epic journey.

WORDS: MEGAN CROUSE

CT-1409, the clone trooper known as Echo, developed a particularly unique perspective on a galaxy he had seen from many different angles. Echo had witnessed the fall of the Republic and the rise of the Empire just like the rest of the galaxy, but his vantage point came with unusual baggage. After all, he had found himself fighting on both sides of the war, first rising through the ranks as a Republic soldier, then brainwashed and exploited by the Separatists. Later, as a member of the Bad Batch, he became a pawn in a game upon which their creators, the Kaminoans, had bet their futures.

While the tragedy of Order 66 fell hardest on the Jedi, it left many clones with their own struggles to confront. As a member of the Bad Batch, Echo wasn't fully one of the Republic's brothers-in-arms, and he was no tool of the Empire. So where did he and his fellows fit in? Echo's story mirrored the moral question of anyone who survived the regime change: should they adapt by joining the Empire, or resist it?

Brotherhood

Echo's experiences in training hinted at where he would end up in the early years of the Empire—something of an individual. As a member of a clone cadet team called Domino Squad, he and fellow cadet Fives didn't work or perform well together. While they would go on to become firm friends and key figures in the role that clones would play in the war, the Kaminoans saw the pair as ineffective soldiers, leading to concerns that the original genetic material upon which the clones were based was beginning to wear thin.

Echo's team eventually came together with the help of 99, a clone who had deviated from the template long before the Bad Batch were conceived. Echo learned quickly that clones who were different had their own value, perhaps making it easier for him to accept his own differences later. ▸

"Echo had witnessed the fall of the Republic and the rise of the Empire just like the rest of the galaxy, but his vantage point came with unusual baggage."

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01 Echo became a valued member of Clone Force 99 after his liberation from Separatist captivity.

02 Echo rose through the ranks to serve the Republic as an elite ARC trooper.

03 The Jedi recognized the efforts of rookies Echo and Fives to protect the Rishi outpost.

This understanding became the foundation of his close relationship with Fives.

Like Echo, and thanks to their encounter with 99, Fives had also learned to look beyond the shiny veneer of the cloning program. The two brothers aspired to become elite ARC troopers and achieved that goal together, but their fates would be quite different. Fives would later go on to uncover the insidious chip program that enabled Palpatine to take control of the clones when the time was right, but that discovery would lead to his death. Whether Echo ever learned the truth about his friend's demise, such a lack of closure was another symptom of the tragedy of the Clone Wars when

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it came to the clones themselves.

Captain Rex also had a big impact on Echo. He led Domino Squad when Separatist droids attempted to infiltrate Kamino via the Rishi Station listening outpost. After noting that the younger clones' armor was still too shiny and new, Rex pressed a bloody handprint onto its chestplate—a mark of battle and a visual reinforcement of Echo's individuality.

04 Captain Rex remembered Echo long after his brother was assumed dead.

05 Rex offered Echo the option of rejoining the clone army following the Anaxes crisis.

06 Instead, Echo accepted another offer, to join the ranks of the Bad Batch.

Tragedy

Echo's life changed irrevocably after he was assigned to a Jedi-led mission to rescue Master Even Piell, who had been imprisoned on the planet Lola Sayu. Piell had been captured in possession of coordinates to a major hyperspace route, and his recovery was crucial to the war effort. Having successfully liberated Piell, along with the vital Nexus Route data, Echo and his team attempted to secure a shuttle to make their escape. However, a Separatist droid destroyed the ship and Echo—caught in the blast—was believed dead.

In fact, Echo had survived, albeit having sustained terrible injuries, and the Separatists had plans for what was left of him. Their scientists transformed Echo into a cyborg, a living computer with which they could predict Republic military strategies and gain the upper hand in the conflict. He was held in stasis, linked by datacords to their computers, unable to resist the constant interrogation of tactics he and Rex had developed together. Fortunately for the essentially comatose Echo, using that information proved to be the Separatist scheme's undoing and led to his eventual rescue.

Having already recognized Echo's fingerprints on the Separatist's countermeasures, Captain Rex undertook a mission to attack the Cyber Center on Anaxes, believing he would find information leading to his old comrade there, and enrolled the assistance of an elite squad of clone commandos to help him—the Bad Batch. When they found Echo, there wasn't much left of him but his "name"—his clone trooper designation CT-1409, encoded within each of the Separatist transmissions generated by him.

There was little time for Echo to make a full recovery, as his skills and knowledge made him the best chance for the Republic to take back Anaxes. Joining Rex and the Bad Batch on a mission to infiltrate General Trench's dreadnought, Echo plugged into the Separatist computers to scupper an army of battle droids with a feedback pulse, and also attempt to help Mace Windu disarm a bomb that threatened the lives of his comrades. His resolute actions earned him the nickname "The Hero of Anaxes."

Having been a captive for so long, stripped of the power of self-determination, it was perhaps inevitable that he would choose a new path for his future once the mission was over. Despite some initial reservations, he accepted Hunter's offer to become a member of Clone Force 99.

Survivors

Separated from his brothers by his cybernetic enhancements, Echo was a natural fit among clones designed to be different. He had joined the Bad Batch partly because he, like them, could be considered a so-called "defective" clone, but while the Bad Batch had lived ▶

07

their whole lives in rivalry with the "regs" (the Republic's standard clones), Echo had been both. What separated Echo from them all, not that he knew it, was that his inhibitor chip had never activated thanks to the way the Separatists had modified his brain. Save for Crosshair, the other members of the Bad Batch had been shocked and unhappy with the clones turn against the Jedi but being habitually set apart from whatever was going on with the other clones wasn't anything new for them. It was Echo who first raised the question of how the clones could have turned so easily against their comrades.

When they returned home to Kamino following the regime change, Echo, as a former reg, was the first to consider the differences between the role that clone troopers had played under the Republic and how that might alter under the Empire. In spite of the physical changes he had undergone, Echo was still a clone, and therefore retained a deep personal connection to the fall of the Republic. With the end of the Kaminoan clone army program, was it right that surviving clone soldiers should simply transition into Imperial stormtroopers?

Echo's life had been dominated by longstanding systems crumbling around him. The cloning program was beginning to deteriorate by the time he was decanted. The Grand Army of the Republic had become somewhat cold to the fate of fallen clones after years of conflict. Even the wisdom of the Jedi Order had been compromised. The Empire, Echo may well have reasoned, looked unlikely to be any different. It's no wonder, then, that the individualism of the Bad Batch and their rebellious nature was attractive to Echo. He had always been different, since those early days as an uninspiring cadet on Kamino to his exploits as an elite ARC trooper, through the dehumanizing efforts of Separatist scientists. To the found family who rescued him, being different was what it was all about.

07 Echo was a changed man after his rescue, but his integrity remained.

08 The Bad Batch was only enhanced by the addition of Echo to their number.

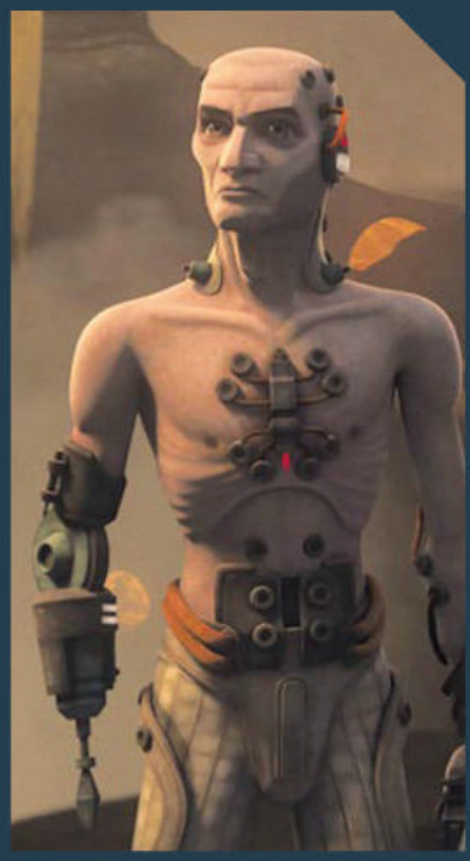
08

CYBERNETICS AND DISABILITY

When Obi-Wan Kenobi described Darth Vader as "more machine now than man," it was to directly connect his former apprentice's cyborg body with his moral choices. Vader became "twisted and evil," Obi-Wan says in *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* (1983), at the same time as he lost parts of his human body.

Of course, it isn't only villains who have cybernetic parts. Look at Luke Skywalker, whose mechanical hand reminded him of the common ground shared between father and son. More often than not, however, the characters with more noticeable modifications—from Darth Vader to Maul, General Grievous, or the resurrected Emperor Palpatine in *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019)—tend to be villains. It's common in science fiction to convey evil visually through characters with mechanical appendages and devices or physical disfigurements.

Echo is an exception to that rule. His body is clearly cybernetic: He has mechanical legs, his right hand has been replaced with a data socket, and chunky implants encircle half of his skull, yet he makes no effort to obscure or change them. Indeed, his ability to interface with computers and his tactical smarts—enhanced by but not stemming entirely from his implants—prove helpful. The changes to Echo's body happened against his will, and they effect his life and his appearance, but they don't make him any less of a hero.



Other *Star Wars* media has also pushed back against the idea that mechanical assistance is inherently corrupting, such as Claudia Gray's novel *Leia, Princess of Alderaan*, in which good-hearted Breha Organa wore visible cybernetic organs she needed to survive. The title character in *Ronin: A Visions Novel*, by Emma Mieko Candon, also wears a prosthetic.

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THE MIDNIGHT

As *Star Wars: The High Republic* approaches the climax of Phase One, author Daniel José Older reveals the steps it has taken to get there.

WORDS: AMY RICHAU

Before *The High Republic*, Daniel José Older's first work in the *Star Wars* galaxy was a short story, "Born in the Storm," for the anthology *From a Certain Point of View: A New Hope*. His full-length novel, *Last Shot*, was released as part of the publishing initiative supporting the release of *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (2018). With *The High Republic* proving to be a runaway success, *Insider* spoke to Older about his approach to writing *Star Wars*.

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MAN

"*STAR WARS* IS ALWAYS ABOUT HAVING A REALLY EXCITING TIME AND FIGHTING FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN AND LEARNING ABOUT WHO YOU ARE ON A DEEPER LEVEL."

01 The cover illustration from Daniel José Older's upcoming *The High Republic* YA novel, *Midnight Horizon*.

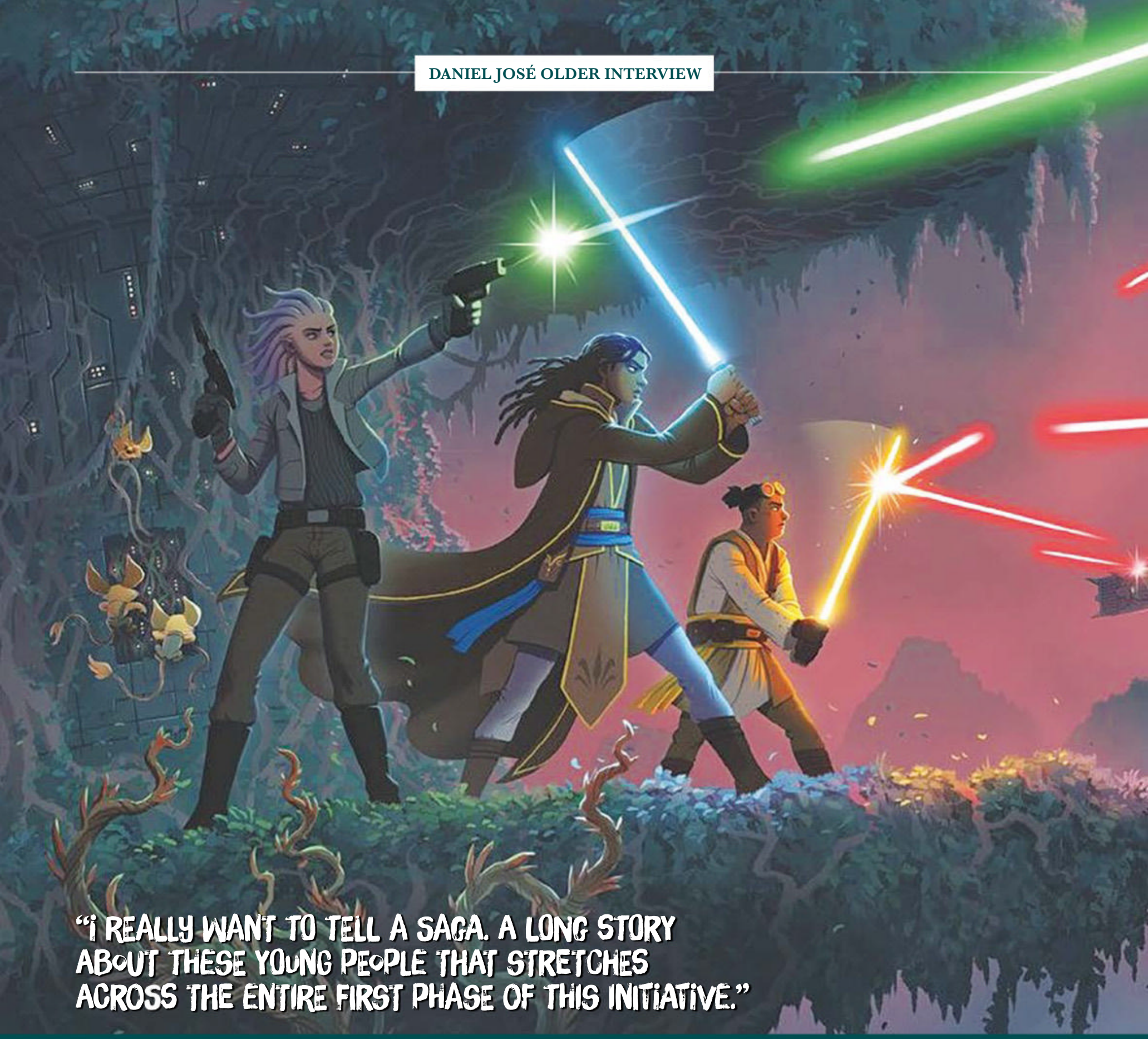
***Star Wars Insider:* What are you drawn to most in a *Star Wars* story?**

Daniel José Older: I think it's adventure first. *Star Wars* is first and foremost great storytelling. And then I think beyond that, there are always these deeper conversations to be had, whether they're about the Force, whether they're about hope, whether they're about what it means to be an active participant in the world. *Star Wars* is always about having a really exciting time and fighting for what you believe in, and learning about who you are on a deeper level. That's the sweet spot. And then, finally, creatures. I'm a Jabba's palace kid, so creatures are really fundamental to the experience of *Star Wars*.

When you were asked to join the team for *The High Republic*, were you approached specifically to write the IDW comic?

We were all approached initially to be a part of the "brain trust" to create it. Our first role in *The High Republic* is as story architects. So, what we did in the first instance was to have sessions out at the Ranch, where we really broke the story down and put our different pieces into it.

Down the road, there came a time to divvy up the kind of roles that people would do, and I knew immediately that the comics was what I wanted to do. Particularly all-ages comics, which is a sweet spot for me probably because I started being a comics fan when I was a kid. In fact, *Star Wars* comics were some of my earliest, although we only had one issue, which I read over and over. I'm a lifelong comic fan, but I had barely written any ▸



"I REALLY WANT TO TELL A SAGA. A LONG STORY ABOUT THESE YOUNG PEOPLE THAT STRETCHES ACROSS THE ENTIRE FIRST PHASE OF THIS INITIATIVE."

until that point, so it was a really perfect way to jump in.

How did your writing process change from writing novels to comics? Did you have to completely re-engineer things?
I've always been a "just run with it" type of novelist. I wouldn't outline or structure stuff beforehand, particularly. I would as I went along, but it was never pre-planned. I was always, "Let's see what happens," and would just run headlong into it. But that doesn't work with scripts. It's not recommended, and for a reason. I started outlining with comic scripts really meticulously, and that actually bled into my novel-writing process. Now I'm a very serious outliner when I do novels too, so that was really interesting. But it is a very, very different medium as a writer.

What I've found is that it reminds me a lot of songwriting. I had a period of my life where I was mostly doing music and wrote a lot of songs, and it's very similar in terms of having a set structure that you're working in, and then finding freedom within that structure. Also, there is the collaborative aspect as a songwriter. One of the best things ever is getting to hear your song played by a whole band or by other people, and that's what happens when you're writing something that you then hand off to someone else. They take it and turn it into theirs. Harvey Tolibao is such an incredible artist. The whole team on *The High Republic Adventures* is fantastic; Rebecca Nalty on colors and Jake M. Wood on letters. Handing a script off to Harvey and those talented people,

02 Petur Antonsson's cover art for the French edition of *Race to Crashpoint Tower*.

02

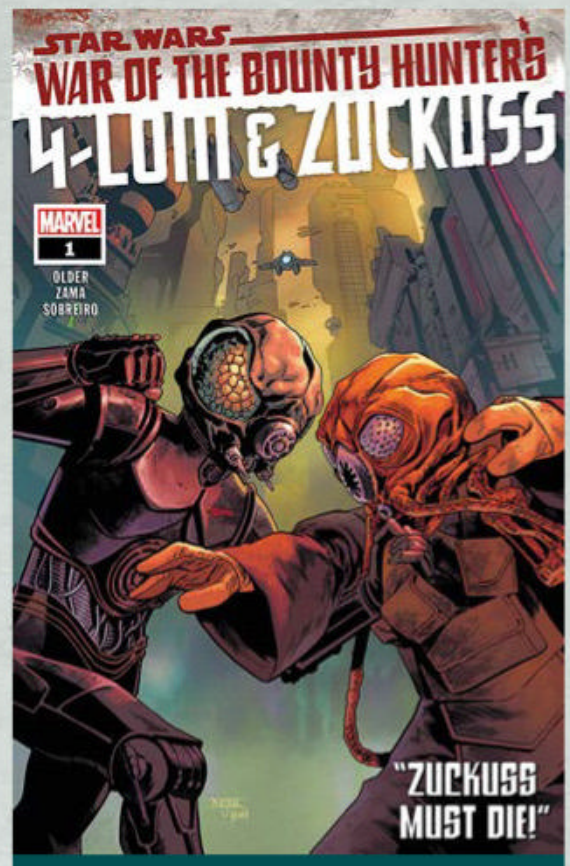
knowing that it'll come back as something totally brand new, but also deeply connected to the vision that I originally had, that whole conversation is so rewarding. It's been a really fun collaboration.

Concise writing is what shines in comics, but it is a challenging skill. Did that come naturally to you?

It's still challenging, in the sense that there's always a lot of world building to do and there are things that you need to express with words, but it's not a medium that's all about words. I enjoy that part of it. It's fun. For me, it feels very freeing to almost write less, and let Harvey and the art team do their job, and do more. It's always great to be reminded that I just have to say what something is and they do it, you know, because they're part of this.

How far out did you outline before you started writing the first issue of *The High Republic Adventures*?

I had a very general sense, in terms of the whole arc. But really only ▶



GOING UNDERGROUND

Having written a short story for the anthology *From a Certain Point of View: The Empire Strikes Back* focusing on the exploits of bounty hunters Zuckuss and 4-LOM, *Star Wars Insider* asked Daniel José Older if he felt particularly drawn to the seedier sides of the galaxy far, far away:

"I love all the underground stuff; the gangsters, the bounty hunters, the smugglers. All that is just so much fun for me," Older revealed. "I knew I wanted to write about the bounty hunters for the *Empire Strikes Back* anthology. They seemed like they would be the most fun, but it was hard. They're hard to write! I like a challenge, so it felt like that was a great way to start."

More recently, Older was given another chance to delve into the galaxy's underworld and penned another adventure for Zuckuss and 4-LOM for Marvel Comics' *War of the Bounty Hunters*. "When they came to me about the Marvel project, I was really excited to play with these two weird, lovable gangster bugs again," said Older, adding, "And to go even deeper and explore more of Nar Shadda, which is maybe my favorite *Star Wars* moon."

DANIEL JOSÉ OLDER'S *STAR WARS*

"Born in the Storm"
From a Certain Point of View: A New Hope
Del Rey (2017)

Last Shot
Del Rey (2018)

"STET!"
From a Certain Point of View: The Empire Strikes Back
Del Rey (2020)

Star Wars: The High Republic Adventures
IDW Publishing (2021–present)

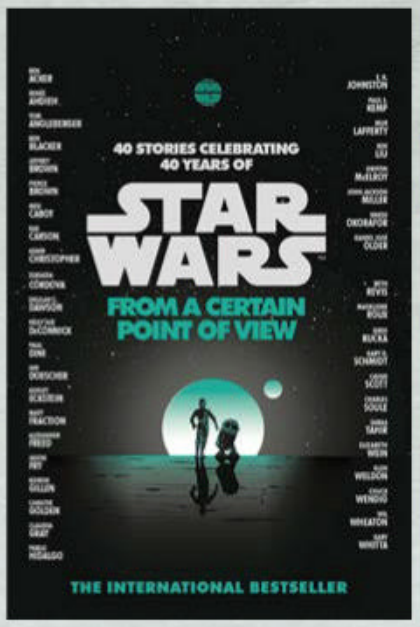
The High Republic: Race to Crashpoint Tower
Disney Lucasfilm Press (2021)

Tales of Villainy: The Gaze Electric
IDW Publishing (2021)

War of the Bounty Hunters: 4-LOM & Zuckuss #1
Marvel Comics (2021)

Star Wars: The High Republic: Trail of Shadows
IDW Publishing (2021)

The High Republic: Midnight Horizon
Disney Lucasfilm Press (2022)



very, very vague. I knew there were characters I wanted to explore. But I also wanted to leave a lot for me to figure out later. But I knew I wanted that initial arc to really be focused on Lula and Zeen and their totally different lives, and then Krix and his divergence from Zeen.

When you knew you were going to be part of a publishing event that covered a whole new era of *Star Wars*, did your mind immediately go to a type of droid or creature or character you've always wanted to write?

What's been really fun is being able to carve out this little corner of Padawans and their friends and their masters who I can really work with. One thing that I did feel really clear about, once I understood what my assignment was going to be, was that I really want to tell a saga. A long story about these young people that stretches across the entire first phase of this initiative, and really feels like it has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

And you got to write for Yoda. Did you ask for him to be in these comics, and were there any reservations about including him?

No, it sort of fell into my lap. I don't think it would have occurred to me because it seems so crazy to ask, "Can I write Yoda?" Obviously, it's a dream come true. And there are challenges, certainly, like it can't be all about Yoda. Yoda takes up a lot of space, and the danger of using any character as iconic as Yoda (and how many characters are even *that* iconic?!) is that they can just take over. This was always supposed to be, and needed to be, a story about the young people, right? It really had to be about them. It couldn't be about someone who's 700 years old or whatever. But Yoda couldn't be totally in the background either, so it was always about finding that balance.

Have you been surprised by the amount of online love Qort has received?

Blown away. Completely blown away. I've always loved Qort, but I did not imagine that. This is a character whose face we never see, we have not heard one word of Basic spoken by him, nor has he had a single major plot point that he has driven. He has just stood there and been amazing. And I have to credit Harvey with a lot of that, because he's done a great job of giving Qort a lot of life along the way. Even to the detail, which I didn't even notice, where Qort almost always has a little object with him in the first bunch of issues that he plays with, and that's kind of *him*, and Harvey did that. That was brilliant.

03

03 Variant cover art by Ario Anindito for *Trail of Shadows* #1.

04

04 Cover art for *The High Republic Adventures* #1, by Harvey Tolibao and Kevin Tolibao.

I also really enjoyed the character Ram in *Race to Crashpoint Tower*. I love that he and another High Republic Jedi, Reath Silas, could really do without the whole Jedi battle thing. How did you develop that character?

These are Jedi who were born and lived a lot of their lives during peacetime. And it's still peacetime in the larger galaxy as a whole, but they're very much in an area where they now have to confront war. And that's a new experience for them. But what I wanted to be able to explore was, what does that look like? So, with Ram, he's just your average nerdy mech kid who loves to build stuff and take it apart and put it back together. And he has the Force. So, what would that look like?

You've talked about *Midnight Horizon* as a "chaotic mess in the best possible way." Is there anything you can say about that upcoming book, or what you think the fan reaction will be to the end of Phase One of *The High Republic*?

It is a book that works unto itself. You could just pick it up and read it and you would have all the context you need within the book. But the experience is enhanced by having read the comics that run up to it, and the stories of these different characters as they intersect and cross paths. And then, as a whole, the initiative itself is building towards a major cumulative event. So, what we're really looking at is this gigantic finale event and *Midnight Horizon* is very much that. So many things come to a head, there are so many exciting character arcs that happen within it, there are new friendships and relationships that happen within it that I'm really excited about.

You obviously take *Star Wars* seriously, but you also inject so much humor into your stories. Why is humor such an important element of your *Star Wars* work?

I find humor very situational. It's like a garden. I try to cultivate the soil of the story to allow for moments that are funny to rise up. And then, when they happen, I run with it. So, to me, especially with *The High Republic* as much as we've pitched it as the height of the Republic, it's a very dark story in a lot of ways. There's a lot of heavy stuff that particularly the young characters are dealing with, and I think it's really important to find balance to that, you know? Humor is the best cleanser. It's the best kind of soap. And I also think humor can be transformative. It's like the Force. It really does show you different points of view of the world.

A CERTAIN POINT OF VIEW

Our resident *Star Wars* expert, Jay Stobie, consults his library of holocrons and ancient Jedi texts to answer your questions about the events, people, and places of the galaxy far, far away....

"As the Skywalker Saga runs from* Star Wars: The Phantom Menace *(1999) to* The Rise of Skywalker *(2019) as one cohesive arc, should the Clone Wars all the way through to the Battle of Exegol be considered as one long, ongoing conflict?"
David McGregor, U.K.

Although spanning a 57-year period that saw allegiances shift and sustained hostilities ebb and flow, the Clone Wars, the Galactic Civil War, and the First Order/Resistance War remained connected by Sheev Palpatine's desire to rule the galaxy as a Sith Lord. Given that Palpatine orchestrated the Clone Wars, controlled the Empire throughout the civil war, and masterminded the First Order's rise to prominence, these conflicts can each be viewed as individual battlefields in a single, devastating war centered around Palpatine's aspirations.

Already the Supreme Chancellor, Palpatine devised the Clone Wars as a means to undermine the Republic's authority, cause the galaxy to lose faith in the Jedi, and consolidate his power by establishing the Galactic Empire. Secretly in control of both the Republic and Separatist forces, Palpatine played the sides against each other perfectly, gaining more influence by the

Transcending The Eras

General Armitage Hux

The son of Brendol Hux, an Imperial commandant who brought his training regimens to the First Order in the wake of the Empire's defeat, General Armitage Hux collaborated with Captain Phasma to orchestrate his father's death. Hux commanded the First Order's stormtroopers, but ultimately betrayed Kylo Ren to the Resistance.

Allegiant General Pryde

Having served under Sheev Palpatine during the height of the Empire, Allegiant General Pryde supplanted General Hux as commander of the First Order's military. When Kylo Ren turned his back on the First Order, Pryde allied the former Supreme Leader's forces with Palpatine's secretive Sith fleet.

Anakin Skywalker

From enduring the life of an enslaved child to sitting on the Jedi Council during the Clone Wars' final days, Anakin Skywalker defended the Republic until he succumbed to Sheev Palpatine's evil machinations. As Darth Vader, he wreaked havoc on the galaxy. Vader's specter continued to influence his grandson, Ben Solo.

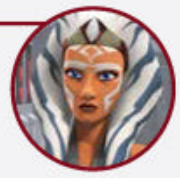
day. With his political foes subdued, the Emperor used Order 66 to destroy the Jedi Order, the ancient enemy of the Sith.

The Clone Wars had concluded, but the fighting continued. The Empire sought to tighten its grip on the galaxy, subduing populations on worlds like Mimban and Onderon, while simultaneously plotting the construction of the Death Star, a superweapon that would force every system to bow to Palpatine's wishes.

War and Peace?

For those who believed in the Republic's ideals, the war became a secretive one. Bail Organa and

Ahsoka Tano



As a Padawan, Ahsoka Tano fought against the Separatist forces under Anakin Skywalker's tutelage before eventually leaving the Jedi Order prior to the conclusion of the Clone Wars. Tano's dedication to duty remained, and the former apprentice played a key role in the fledgling Rebellion's formation.

Cassian Andor

Cassian Andor's battles began when he was only six years old, before the fall of the Republic. While several founding members of the Rebel Alliance had sided with the Grand Army of the Republic during the Clone Wars, Andor came from the ranks of the Confederacy of Independent Systems.

Mon Mothma covertly gathered resources and organized a rebellion to oppose the Empire, passing along their values to the next generation of leaders, including Leia Organa. Disparate rebel cells emerged, ranging from the violent extremism of Saw Gerrera to Enfys Nest's Robin Hood-style hope and optimism.

Events did not always transpire according to Palpatine's wishes, as the Emperor clearly would have preferred to avoid the destruction of both Death Stars, Darth Vader's betrayal, and his own death at Endor. However, the Emperor planned for every contingency. By quietly diverting military assets to the Unknown Regions, politically undermining the New Republic, and creating a Sith stronghold on Exegol, Palpatine laid the groundwork for the First Order to continue the Empire's work.

Afraid to consolidate power or build a grand fleet, the New Republic never reached the stature of the Galactic Republic or the Empire. Numerous planets opted to depart and align with the First Order. When the First Order finally unveiled its military might and used Starkiller Base to destroy the Hosnian system, the faction easily swept in to fill the leadership vacuum left by the fallen New Republic.

Everything came full circle when the reborn Emperor emerged on Exegol, revealing himself to be the architect of the First Order. Fortunately, Rey and the Resistance showed the galaxy that hope could overcome hate by killing the Emperor, putting an end to his grand scheme, and annihilating the Sith fleet. With all of this in mind, the clash on Exegol could be considered the final battle in Sheev Palpatine's epic, decades-long war that originally began on Geonosis, all those years before.

PALPATINE'S PROGRESS

22 BSW4:
Jedi Master Yoda led the Grand Army of the Republic's new clone forces into battle against Count Dooku and the Separatists at Geonosis, igniting the Clone Wars.

19 BSW4:
Anakin Skywalker killed Count Dooku above Coruscant, while General Grievous was defeated by Obi-Wan Kenobi at Utapau, effectively toppling the Separatist droid army's senior leadership.

19 BSW4:
Sheev Palpatine took Anakin Skywalker, now Darth Vader, as his new apprentice and declared the formation of the Galactic Empire. The Emperor instituted Order 66, nearly wiping out the entire Jedi Order.

4 ASW4:
The Rebel Alliance dealt a fatal blow to the Empire at the Forest Moon of Endor, where the Second Death Star was destroyed and Emperor Palpatine and Darth Vader both perished.

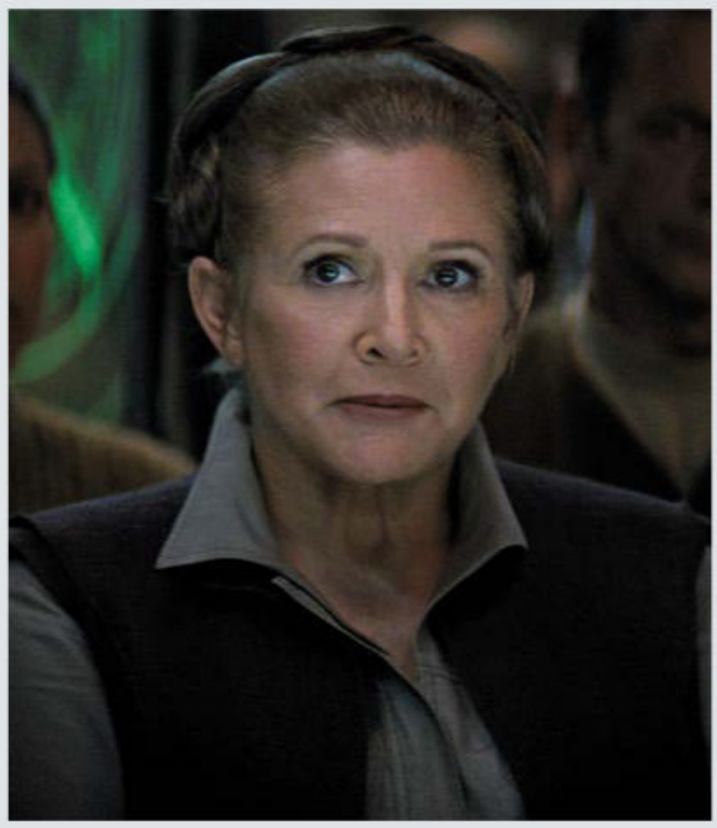
34 ASW4:
Rising from the ashes of the Empire, the First Order utilized Starkiller Base to wipe out the New Republic. Despite the loss of Starkiller Base, the First Order swiftly became the dominant power in the galaxy.

35 ASW4:
Resistance forces and citizens from across the galaxy united to launch a strike against the reborn Emperor's Sith fleet at Exegol. Rey eliminated Palpatine once and for all, leaving the Sith Star Destroyers undefended from the Resistance attack.

Leia's Love And Light

Born as the Galactic Republic began its transformation into the Galactic Empire, Leia Organa seemed destined to be a child of war. Orphaned by her father's actions as the Clone Wars drew to a close, Leia eventually became a vital part of her adoptive parents' work with the Rebellion against the Empire. Following the Emperor's apparent defeat, Leia served the New Republic, yet she left to form the Resistance as the First Order grew in strength.

Despite a life surrounded by conflict, Leia's natural compassion and Alderaanian roots fortified her belief in helping others. Leia did not rebel to cause chaos, but rather to protect the innocent. Whether making friends with Ewoks or giving her last breath to redeem her son from the dark side, Leia remained a beacon of hope in tumultuous times.



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QUITE THE COLLECTION

Flea-market fan feels the power of the Force

S*tar Wars* has always been a part of KC's life. "My mom tells a funny story about being pregnant with me, standing in line to see S*tar Wars: Return of the Jedi* (1983)," she reveals. "I grew up watching it with my family. Sick days were for staying home and watching *Star Wars*."

While not a huge fan at first, KC took an interest in the prequel trilogy and lined the bedroom wall at their parents' house with *Star Wars* posters and figures. That interest in the saga only intensified as KC grew up. "As an adult, my collection is far more diverse and ranges from vintage (Greedo and Chewbacca are my favorites) to silly, like laughing monkey-lizards," says KC. "I love going to flea markets and finding amazing figures and giving them a second life in my collection."

While many collectors go to great lengths to preserve their figures in boxes, that's not the case

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with KC's collection. "I definitely have a preference for unboxed items, because I love to be able to admire them. And by that I actually mean 'play with them,'" laughs KC. "I'm mostly known in the collecting community for my love of three things: *Star Wars* clothing, Greedo, and Finn."

"You will rarely see me without a *Star Wars* shirt or dress on. I have a massive collection of shirts I've collected from Disney Parks and Celebration and artists over the years," KC shares. "I love collecting Greedo because I find the character design phenomenal. And Finn is amazing because the idea of a stormtrooper who ends up fighting for the Resistance is inspiring."

ARTISTS' ALLEY

Talented *Star Wars* fans share their amazing drawings inspired by the galaxy far, far away....

01 "CASSIAN ANDOR" AND "POE DAMERON" BY BATTUMANDO

The fan artist known as BattuMando has always gravitated toward depicting rebel and Resistance heroes, whether they be spies like Cassian Andor or ace pilots like Poe Dameron. "I always find my inspiration for my work from the characters that operate within those factions," explains the artist. "I find that painting characters who embody hope, love, and perseverance help me to keep those traits close to my heart."

02 "OMEGA, CHOPPER, AND HERA SYNDULLA" BY DAYTONA LEE

As Clone Force 99 went on the run from Imperial forces, they learned that alliances can be forged in unexpected places. "Some friendships will last a lifetime. That was the inspiration behind my newest fan art featuring the friendship of Omega, Chopper and Hera Syndulla," says artist Daytona Lee. "Meeting for the first time, both found some common ground in the galaxy as they joined forces in *Star Wars: The Bad Batch* (2021-present)."

BOUNTY HUNTERS

Scouring the galaxy for the stars of *Star Wars*...

CRAFTSMANSHIP
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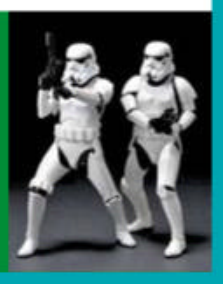


01

02

GIANCARLO ESPOSITO:
A Gift for Moff Gideon

While the Mandalorian didn't exactly enjoy his run-ins with Moff Gideon, Sarah Taylor was far more impressed when she met Giancarlo Esposito, the actor who plays Gideon in *The Mandalorian* (2019-present), at a convention in North Carolina.

"I decided to celebrate the opportunity by drawing Moff Gideon with the Darksaber, as a thank you to Giancarlo for being one of my favorite villains in *Star Wars*," says Taylor. Unlike his fictional on-screen counterpart, Esposito proved to be incredibly kind. "All I wanted was a selfie with him, and I decided to give him my drawing when we met," Taylor adds. "He was so grateful for the portrait, telling me that I was blessed to have such a gift, and he insisted on giving me an autograph in return." After chatting with the actor, Taylor reached an inevitable conclusion: "Giancarlo Esposito is one of the nicest people I've ever met."

01 Sarah Taylor poses with Giancarlo Esposito, Moff Gideon in *The Mandalorian*.

02 Sarah Taylor's drawing of Moff Gideon that she gifted to Giancarlo Esposito.

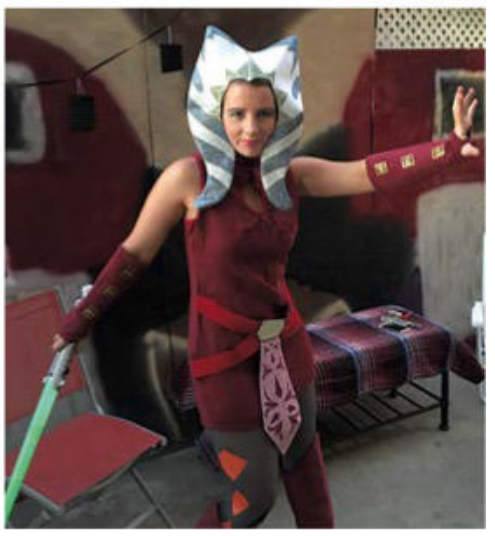
RETURN OF THE JEDI-ORAMA

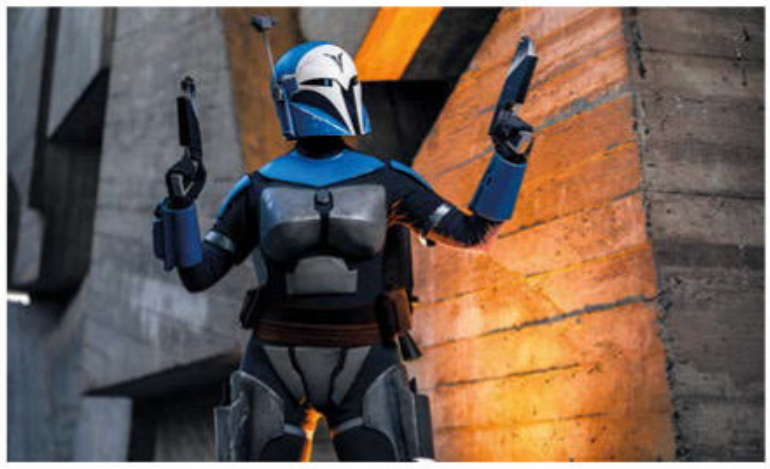
Crafting classic characters out of paper

In ninth grade, Alexia Gardner received astounded reactions from her friends when she told them that she had never seen *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) before. The issue was soon remedied, as Alexia recollects, "My dad had recently turned our garage into a TV and family room, and I can remember watching *Star Wars* for the first time like it was yesterday. *A New Hope* is still my favorite."

From that moment on, Gardner was hooked on the galaxy far, far away. "After that summer, there was always a *Star Wars* gift under the Christmas tree. I have a *New Hope* puzzle that I put together that is still framed," says the dedicated fan. "A few Halloweens back, I dressed up as Ahsoka Tano." Alexia even incorporates *Star Wars* into her workspace, as an original *Return of the Jedi* poster adorns her desk, still wrapped in plastic. On top of that, she managed to spread her love for the franchise throughout her family, as her nephew has now picked up an interest in the saga's various droids.

During the pandemic, Gardner decided to pass the time by combining her talent for crafting dioramas with *Star Wars*. "In college, I would create proscenium sets for my degree in Production & Set Design for different plays," explains Alexia. "I made three characters out of construction paper: Rey, Chewbacca, and BB-8. Then I created a diorama scene from construction paper and cardstock." Gardner took her creativity a step further and made a video of her project that included *Star Wars* sound effects.





COSPLAYING FOR A CAUSE

Making a Bo-Katan Kryze costume a family affair

Many of Ukrainian cosplayer Yevgeniya Manshylina's earliest memories are associated with *Star Wars*.

"The view from my playpen was filled with plastic toys of the musicians from the Mos Eisley Cantina," she recalls. "I had a dog named Luke, and in kindergarten I arranged fights with multi-colored gymnastics sticks that we used as lightsabers. When my parents were not at home, I would turn over the chairs and imagine I was in an AT-AT cabin."

Manshylina felt inspired by the Polish garrison of the 501st Legion after meeting them as she studied in the country. "Until then, my pride and joy had been my official stormtrooper helmet," she says. The idea of assembling a full suit felt unrealistic at first, but a year later, Manshylina and her husband became the first in their country to join the 501st Legion and set up the Ukrainian outpost.

Manshylina created her Bo-Katan Kryze costume (photos by Kirill Emtsov), with the help of her entire family, using a mix of modified ABS plastic parts, 3D-printing, sculpting, and hand-sewn fabric parts. "It was a long but interesting process," she explains. "We crafted everything ourselves at home, except working with the ABS plastic."

Manshylina embodies the spirit of her *Star Wars* heroes through several charity events. "I'm always happy to visit the local hospital in costume to bring some fun for the kids who are patients there, and also to help at animal shelters," she says. "I always remember the happy faces when people see their favorite characters. My heart just melts. I will continue to promote the idea of combining cosplay with charity, because it's my human essence. I love it."

TK-101

HINTS, TIPS, AND IDEAS FOR CRAFTING YOUR OWN *STAR WARS* GALAXY

BOONTA EVE COTTON BUD CHALLENGE

In this issue's edition of TK-101, we build a Q-tip-scale diorama of Mos Espa's Grand Arena, taking inspiration from Industrial Light & Magic's original miniature stands.

WORDS: CHRISTOPHER COOPER

TK-101 isn't sure which day the Boonta Eve Classic falls upon this year, but for argument's sake let's say it's probably around about the time you're reading this issue. Which is lucky, as we've set ourselves the challenge of recreating one of ILM's signature miniatures from *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999): the Mos Espa Grand Arena that hosted the famous podrace on Tatooine (albeit a tiny section thereof).

The miniature stands of the arena were famously populated by cotton buds, painted in assorted colors to represent the diverse denizens of the galaxy caught up in the heady atmosphere of race day. As we had a box of the things gathering dust in our bathroom cabinet (along with some unused interdental brushes and minty floss), we were already good to go. And if we were going to build a place for our cotton bud audience to sit, we really ought to give them something to watch, so we added a scratch-built podracer to our to-do list.

Studio Scale

Usually, in the realm of modelmaking enthusiasts, a "Studio Scale" model refers to a scratch-built recreation of a screen-used miniature at the exact same scale as the original. Dedicated fans lovingly research every detail and measurement, source original kit parts, and devote many hours to achieving a result as close to the filming miniature as possible. TK-101's approach, as you'll have come to expect, is a little more home baked. But that's the point of TK-101—we try our hand at things we've not attempted before, and hopefully inspire you to have a go too.

As cotton buds only come in one size, the scale TK-101 would be working to was 1:1 compared against the ILM model. Except, of course, their miniature was enormous, so while we could confidently claim ours would be "studio scale," it could be argued this was only true from a certain point of view. We'd be making something considerably smaller.

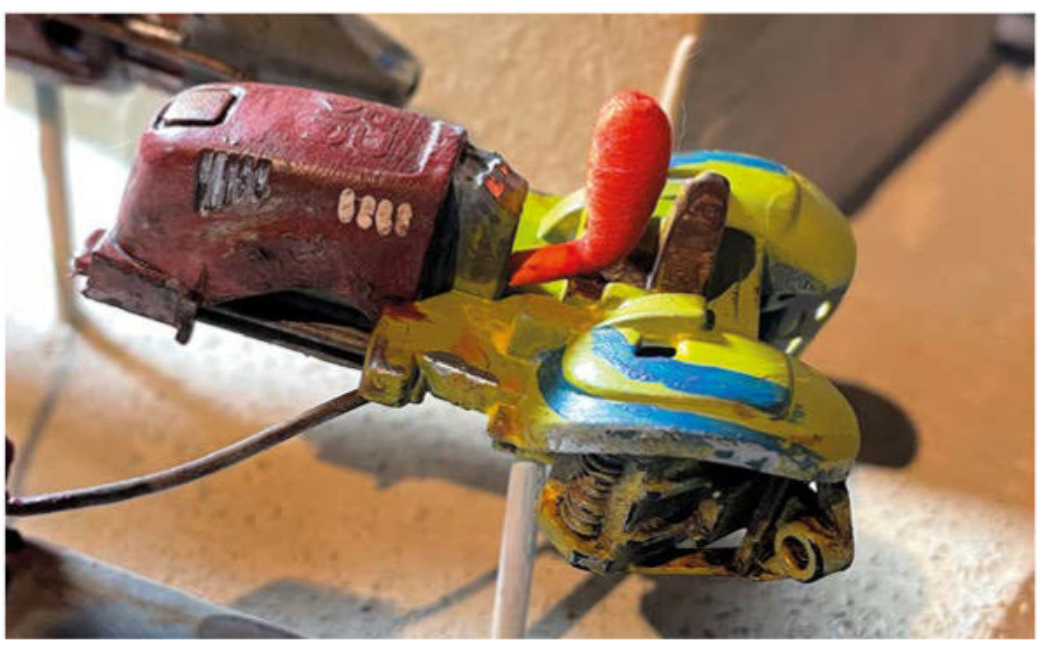
I Built a Racer!

Before we could determine how much of the arena to build, it seemed sensible to work on the podracer first. That way we could

also figure out how big our display base would need to be.

Like Anakin Skywalker, we like to think we can build a podracer out of anything (and Watto need never know). Our racer used parts from a deconstructed dollar store toy tractor, a handful of soft drink bottle caps, lids from some dry felt tip coloring pens, and a trio of paper clips. As a fun Easter egg to tie the racer in with the stand, we finished things off with a cotton bud pilot in the cockpit.

The base and stand itself were built from foam core card, which is lightweight, simple to cut, and easy to stick together with PVA glue. The construction was covered with ready mixed plaster, a sprinkling of real sand, and then painted. But when it came to adding our cotton bud patrons, we realized that CG duplication exists for good reason—cutting, painting, and gluing our mini racegoers into the stand took... a while! As TK-101 has done many times before, we doff our cap to the artisans at ILM who undertook the same task on a more gargantuan scale all those years ago. Now that was podracing!



The *Star Wars* Archive

The behind-the-scenes story of a galaxy far, far away....

THE BLUE BLADE

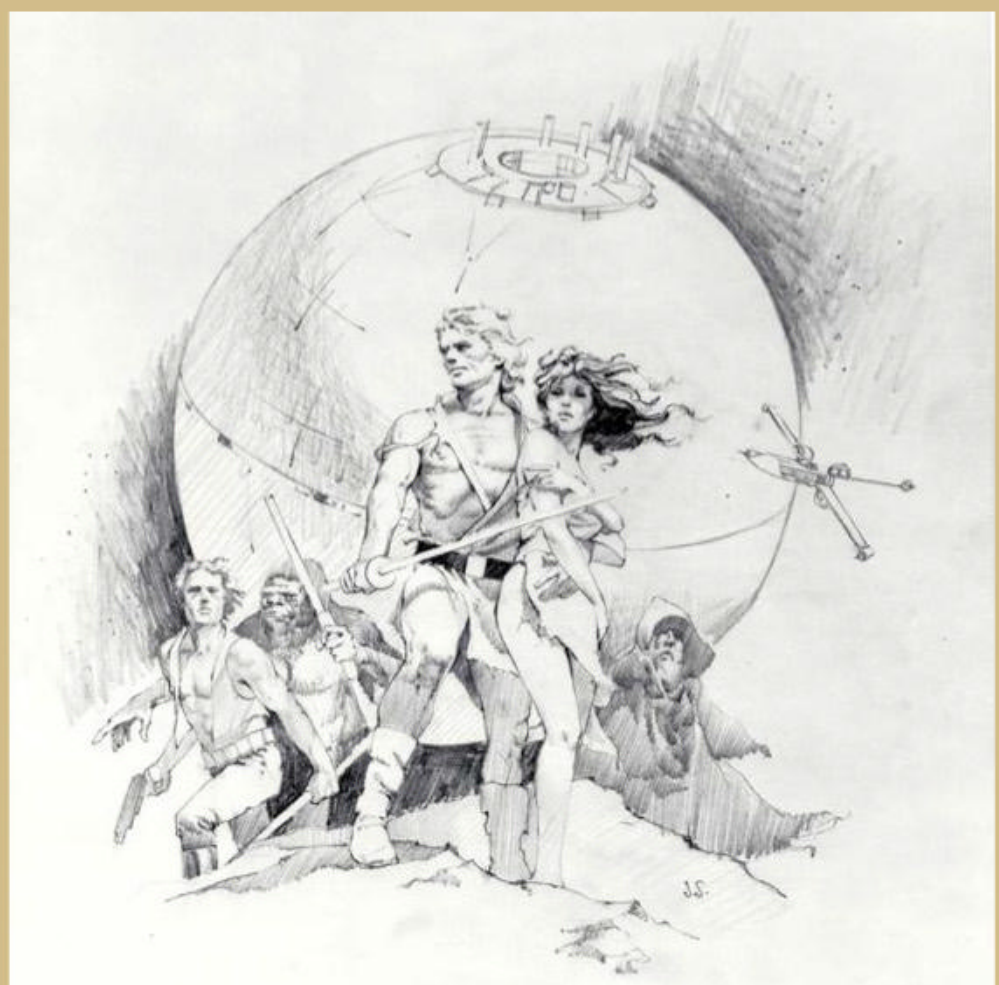
Of all the lightsabers seen in the *Star Wars* saga, the weapon built by Anakin Skywalker and passed down to Luke and then Rey is perhaps the most iconic, despite similar but quite different props being used in each of the movies in which it appeared.

A redressed version of the original prop was used by Mark Hamill in *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), while a machined prop closely resembling the original was used by Hayden Christensen in *Revenge of the Sith* (2002). The sequel trilogy utilized modern replicas of the original Graflex camera flash as the basis for Rey's lightsaber.

Luke Skywalker was reunited with his original lightsaber in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017), albeit as the weapon his Force-projection used to dupe Supreme Leader Kylo Ren (as pictured right, during the filming of the movie).

01 Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker) filming his lightsaber duel for *The Last Jedi* (2017).

02



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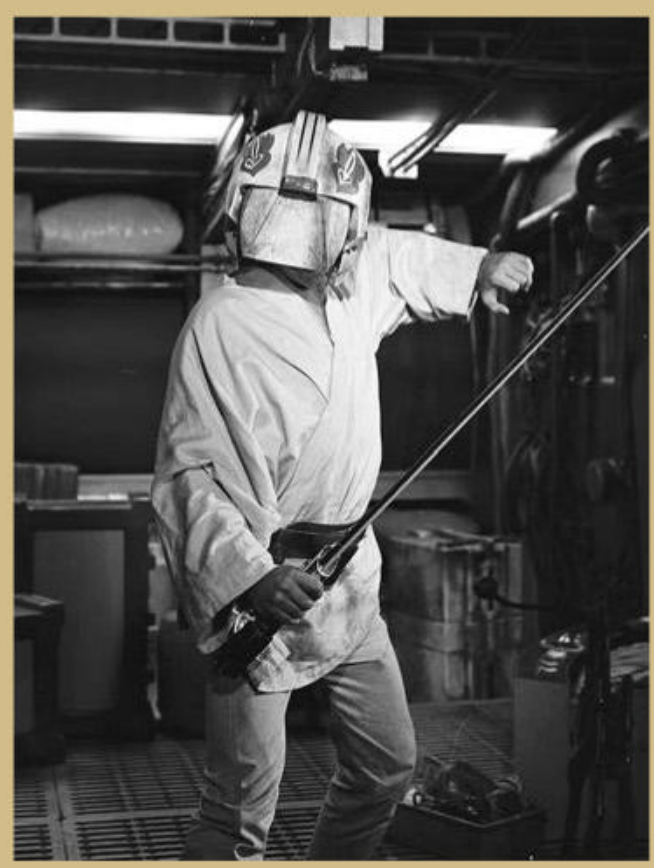

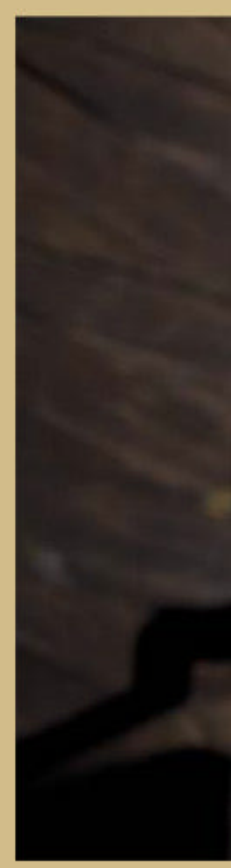

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02 This early poster concept for *A New Hope* (1977) by John Solie depicted Luke Skywalker and friends in classical poses.

03 Solie's pulp fiction style is echoed in this concept art of Luke Skywalker and Rey by Iain McCaig for *The Force Awakens (2015)*.

04 Mark Hamill in training for his fight with Rey in *The Last Jedi*.

05 Unit photography from *A New Hope* of Luke Skywalker's first training session with a lightsaber. Note the cables running from the hilt and up Mark Hamill's sleeve, powering a motor that rotated the lightsaber's wooden blade, which was specially coated to reflect off-camera light.

06 *The Last Jedi* director Rian Johnson and Mark Hamill rehearse for the pivotal Ben Solo flashback scenes, using Skywalker's lightsaber hilt first seen in *Return of the Jedi* (1983).

A Flash of Light

Originally constructed by set decorator Roger Christian for *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977), the lightsaber wielded by Luke Skywalker became a totemic symbol for the light side of the Force throughout the movie saga.

It took just a few simple additions to transform an antique camera flashgun—namely a 3-cell Graflex flash—into the weapon of a Jedi Knight, including several rubber T-tracks glued on to create the grip, the bubble lens from an Exactra calculator for the switch, and a D-ring riveted to the end so that the hilt could clip onto Luke's belt.

STAR WARS
THE HIGH REPUBLIC

STARLIGHT

Shadows Remain

PART TWO

By Justina Ireland

Previously:

Nightmares about her past have been plaguing Starlight Beacon's head of security, Ghal Tarpfen. Somehow the Nihil have discovered her darkest secret, and expect her to comply with their plans….

Velko Jahen sat in the security hub of Starlight Beacon staring at her terminal and checking the scans once again. It had been three days since anyone had seen Ghal Tarpfen, Starlight Beacon's head of security, and Velko was beginning to fear the worst.

Ghal might actually be a traitor.

All the evidence pointed to that logical conclusion, but Velko's gut told her quite the opposite. Ghal was prickly and curt, but she respected the Republic and did things by the book. Could someone so worried about protocol really participate in an assassination attempt?

A few days ago, someone had attacked a visiting dignitary, Vice President Hackrack Bep, an official from the planet of Dalna. He had arrived on Starlight in the company of Jedi Padawan Imri Cantaros, seeking aid because of suspected Nihil activity. That wasn't out of the ordinary. As the Jedi and the Republic had pushed the space pirates to the brink of desperation with continued operations against their marauding, more and more planets had sought assistance, but it was odd that the official had been attacked in his rooms so shortly after his arrival. He had no memory of the assault, and the only video clips that showed any evidence had been erased by Ghal, her security number clearly recorded in the logs.

Velko had flagged the activity for further investigation, but the droid assigned to the task had found no anomalies in the data. With the emergency on Dalna, which had forced Starlight Beacon to be towed through hyperspace to render aid, Velko had not yet been able to fully debrief Rodor Keen on the exact nature of Ghal's disappearance. And now that it was time, she was hesitant.

There was less than an hour until Velko was scheduled to meet with the highest-ranking Republic official on Starlight. Velko had planned on telling the man that the most logical conclusion was that Ghal had been working with the Nihil, but now she wasn't so sure.

If Ghal was working with the Nihil, what would she have to gain from it? There were no deposits of credits into any of her financial accounts, and a search of Ghal's quarters had turned up nothing suspicious.

Velko looked at the information one last time—the deletion of the assault, the strange nature of the messages in Ghal's message queue—and willed the information to turn into something less incriminating, anything but a clear picture that Ghal Tarpfen was a traitor. There had to be a better explanation.

***

GHAL TARPFEN WOKE WITH A START. SHE TENSED AS SHE REALIZED SHE WAS BOUND TO A CHAIR BY HER WRISTS, IN THE GALLEY OF A SHIP SHE DIDN'T RECOGNIZE.

Ghal Tarpfen woke with a start. She tensed as she realized she was bound to a chair by her wrists, in the galley of a ship she didn't recognize. The star-strewn darkness beyond a nearby viewport told her all she needed to know. She was in a very bad spot.

Ghal's skin felt dry, tight and itchy, a common occurrence when she'd taken too long to visit a mister, so she estimated she must have been out for at least a day, if not longer. Her head was heavy and achy, a feeling she'd never experienced before, and she wondered if she'd been subjected to some sort of knockout gas. The last thing she remembered was confronting Senator Ghirra Starros in the doorway to some other official's room, which meant the senator must have had an accomplice.

Ghal took in her surroundings, ignoring the rising panic making her heart pound. Judging by the sparkling surfaces of the galley, the ship looked like it was a newer model, especially considering the smart food prep unit mounted to a nearby counter. Everything was shiny and pristine. Testing her bonds, Ghal decided struggling was futile. She needed to conserve her strength. Someone was flying the ship, and at some point they would come to check on her. When they did, Ghal would be ready. The fact that she was still alive was a good sign. It meant that they thought they had use for her. It meant there was still a fighting chance.

Sure enough, a while later the door slid open, admitting a rough-looking Aqualish woman, the dark orbs of her single pair of eyes and a set of mandibles dominating her face.

"You wake. Good," she said between grunts and growls. "We land soon."

"I… where are we?" Ghal asked.

"No Space. Senator has use for you. So, you'll be kept alive as long as needed."

Ghal said nothing. They had to be Nihil—who else would make a trip to No Space?—and she wouldn't help them with anything. Despite the newness of the ship, the Aqualish had the rough look of those space pirates. Her clothing was designed purely for survival, and the filter apparatus that dangled from her neck had the distinct look of a gas mask.

But more interesting was the silver key fob dangling from her trousers. Most likely the key to her restraints. The Republic used a similar system, and Ghal was well trained in how the key fob functioned. It was the first ray of hope she'd had since she'd awakened.

"Can I get some water," Ghal said, her voice extra croaky. "I… need water."

"You wait until we land."

"I'm sorry. I can't…" Ghal said, trailing off. She tried to make her voice sound weak. "Please. I don't know how long I've been out, but my skin is so dry."

That was true, though while her skin felt uncomfortable Ghal was not in any kind of danger from lack of moisture. Not that the Aqualish knew that.

The woman sneered at Ghal but went to a nearby cabinet and pulled out a bottle with a spritzer attachment. She approached Ghal, who lashed out with a kick as soon as the Aqualish was close enough. Ghal's wrists had been bound, but her feet had not. The kick landed well, catching the woman in her mandibles and knocking her unconcious. Ghal used the tip of her toes to tap the fob until her restraints unlocked, freeing her.

One problem solved, innumerable more to handle.

Ghal searched the woman quickly for weapons; finding none, she picked her up and put her in the chair she had just vacated, locking her into the restraints.

It turned out that Ghal was actually parched. She went to the food unit and ordered enough water that she could drink a bit and pour the rest over her head, not trusting whatever the Aqualish woman had been about to spray her with.

VELKO HURRIED INTO THE CONTROLLER'S OFFICE. SHE WAS SURPRISED TO FIND JEDI MASTER ESTALA MARU STILL SPEAKING WITH RODOR.

And then Ghal set out to see just what kind of Nihil the ship contained.

***

Velko paced outside of Rodor Keen's office as she waited for him to finish up his daily meeting with the marshal of Starlight, Jedi Avar Kriss. When Kriss finally exited, the pale-skinned human woman sparing the Soikan administrator a nod of acknowledgement, Velko hurried into the controller's office. She was surprised to find Jedi Master Estala Maru still speaking with Rodor.

"Oh. Should I come back?" Velko asked, and Rodor waved her over.

"No. Master Maru is here for the same reason you are."

"Ghal Tarpfen," The Jedi Master said, the Kessurian male's face twisted with concern. "She's not on Starlight Beacon."

"No." Velko began. "It seems like she's fled."

"Someone was extorting her," Maru said. "Did you have any clue?"

Velko shook her head. "No. I knew something was wrong, but even before the hyperspace tow and the Dalnan refugee crisis we were spread thin. Processing the Nihil, we've been picking up and trying to make sure all of our regular duties were accounted for." Velko sighed. "I should've noticed something was amiss." She and Ghal weren't friends, and Velko wasn't silly enough to think that the Mon Calamari woman would have confided in her. But perhaps if she hadn't been so wrapped up in her duties she could've noted the change in Ghal's behavior before things got bad.

Velko didn't believe she couldn't have helped.

The Jedi nodded; his expression pensive. "It seems as though it was mostly benign, but she was getting a number of messages from the same exchange. I've tried locating where they originated, but I'm still waiting on the droid to return with the answer."

"If Ghal was being extorted then she might have gone after the people responsible," Rodor said. "Did you find any footage of her leaving Starlight?"

Velko shook her head, looking to the Jedi. But he was similarly vexed. "No. There's no sign of her departure."

"Ghal Tarpfen is a competent woman," Rodor finally said after a long silence. "Let's just hope that wherever she's gotten to we can help her when she needs it."

***

Ghal stalked through the ship, checking compartments and listening for the telltale sound of boots approaching. But the ship seemed to be empty, so Ghal doubled back to the cockpit to see just who was flying the thing.

A Chagrian woman sat at the yoke. Ghal tried to sneak up on her, but the woman somehow sensed her and spun

around. Ghal lashed out with a fist before the woman could finish standing, but she was able to easily block the punch, landing one of her own to Ghal's unprotected midsection.

"Ghal. You're supposed to be in the galley," the woman said as Ghal gasped for breath. The Mon Calamari woman leapt backward to avoid a kick, and Ghal was able to take the opportunity to land a low kick of her own.

The Chagrian woman fell to the ground, and Ghal was on her immediately, kneeling on her chest so that she couldn't move. The woman struggled, and Ghal pulled one of the woman's lethorns and twisted it until she yelped.

"I know you," Ghal said, once the woman had stilled. "Jeni Wataro. You work for Senator Izzet Noor."

The woman laughed. "I work for myself. And when it suits me, for the Eye."

An alarm began to sound in the cockpit, and Jeni began to cackle. "That's an alert that we're about to encounter another ship. And where we are, I guarantee it won't be anyone from the Republic."

Ghal pushed her forearm against Jeni's throat, making the woman gasp for breath. It wasn't an elegant way to subdue an opponent, but Ghal was pressed for time. Jeni struggled and tried to throw Ghal off of her, but eventually her struggles fell away to nothing.

Ghal checked the woman to make sure she was still breathing, and once she was satisfied she hadn't killed Jeni she dragged her body clear of the cockpit door, closing and latching the thing so she wouldn't be disturbed.

Ghal was not a very good pilot, and she hadn't flown in what felt like years. The controls meant next to nothing to her, and she took a moment to stare at the various knobs and dials, which were labeled in something other than Galactic Basic.

Ghal's remaining hope evaporated, and she swore long and loud. How in the deepest sea was she supposed to turn this thing back toward Starlight?

Ghal took the yoke, and tried to turn the ship to another course, but she very quickly realized that the settings were locked somehow. Fumbling with a number of switches and buttons did nothing, and Ghal sat back in the seat, a keen sense of defeat coming over her. The last time she had felt this helpless was when her former lover, now a King of Mon Cala, had put her aside.

The beeping in the cockpit grew more insistent, and Ghal saw three approaching ships. How long would it be before they began to fire upon her vessel? The comm unit blinked at her as someone tried to open a channel with the ship, but Ghal ignored it. There was no way she could take on three ships worth of Nihil. She'd lost. The Nihil had won.

Ghal closed her eyes, took a deep breath and opened them once more. There had to be something she could do, something to at least warn the Republic that there were dangers lurking in the kelp. First Senator Ghirra Starros, and now Jeni Wataro. How many others in the Senate were working with the Nihil for their own purposes?

Ghal didn't know, but she opened a comms channel, selecting a wide swath of frequencies to ping to, most of them Starlight Beacon frequencies, but a few Mon Cal that she remembered from her Royal Guard days. This far out in No Space she would be lucky if even one person heard her message.

Ghal took a deep breath, and opened the channels, sending a simple voice message since it was far more likely to get where someone could hear it. "My name is Ghal Tarpfen, Head of Security for

Starlight Beacon. I have been kidnapped by the Nihil, and by the time you hear this message I will most likely be dead. But you must know that the Senate is compromised. At least two members there have been working with the Nihil: Senator Ghirra Starros of Hosnian Prime and Jeni Wataro, aide to Senator Izzet Noor of Serenno. Please be aware that there might be other spies in the Senate, and at all other levels of the Republic."

Ghal cleared her throat and repeated the message again, and again. When the first few blasts came from the approaching ships, she continued talking, repeating the message once more before putting it on a loop.

A pounding came from the door to the cockpit, followed by yelling in a language that Ghal didn't understand. There was some murmuring, as another shot rattled the ship down to its rivets.

"Unlock the escape shuttles, you horned squawkin!" came Jeni Wataro's voice through the door.

A POUNDING CAME FROM THE DOOR TO THE COCKPIT, FOLLOWED BY YELLING.

Ghal smiled, the first in a very long time. "Sorry, not sure I know how to do that."

"Then let me in to answer the challenge question! You're condemning us to death."

"I had family on Valo," Ghal yelled to be heard over the noise of the ship as another blast set off a fresh bout of alarms. The life support systems had been damaged in that last cannon hit, and it wouldn't be long until the ship failed utterly. "Do you think they begged for someone to save them as well?"

The pounding on the door ceased, and Ghal leaned back in the chair and began to sing the lullaby her mother had always sang for her when she was a small fry.

It was a better death than she could have hoped for.

***

Velko woke in the middle of her sleep shift, startled by something she couldn't name. She'd been dreaming, she was sure of that, but what about?

There was a pinging at her door, and when she went to open it she found Imri Cantaros, the Padawan who had helped to save the Dalnans when their volcanic system flooded the planet with lava.

"Administrator Velko," he said with a sheepish grin. "Master Maru tried calling you over the comms, but I guess you didn't hear. There's something he wants you to listen to."

"Give me a moment," Velko said, closing the door. She hurriedly donned her uniform and followed the Padawan to the command hub, where Maru presided over a number of monitors.

"Velko," Maru said, a kind expression on his face. "We have news."

He didn't say anything else, just went to a nearby comms unit and began to play a message.

"Ghal Tarpfen…kidnapped…Nihil… Senate is compromised… there might be other spies… the Republic."

The message began to repeat, and Velko frowned. There were few words, the majority of the transmission was static. "What is the rest of the message? What are we missing?"

"I'm not sure. This is all we have been able to recover. I'm reaching out to other security units to see if they received anything similar, but I wanted to let you know first."

Velko nodded, the sinking feeling in her middle a heavy weight. Ghal was gone. There were few places in the galaxy far enough away that she might have trouble sending a message, and wherever she was had to be outside of Republic control. She knew her time was at an end, and yet she made every effort to send them a warning as her last act.

"Can you send a copy of that to my personal message queue?" Velko asked, and Maru nodded.

"I'm sorry about your loss," he said, and Velko left the command hub without another word, lost in her own dark thoughts.

She wandered around Starlight Beacon. There was still time in her sleep shift to rest, but she was no longer tired. She walked onto one of the observation decks, looking out and the seemingly endless expanse of stars beyond the transparisteel barrier.

Ghal might be gone, but her words were still there for Velko to parse and examine. Nihil spies in both the Senate and the Republic? How had Ghal found that out? Was that why she'd gone missing from Starlight?

Velko didn't know.

She sat on a bench and stared out into the vastness of space, letting the emotions swirl through her. In the months that she'd been on Starlight, Ghal Tarpfen had taught Velko more than the Mon Calamari woman would ever know. Ghal had been fierce and unyielding in her dedication to the Republic, and she was a fine head of security. During the Soikan Civil War, Velko had learned how important it was to have allies. Not friends, but something more: a person who could always be depended on to be there in the fight, someone who would watch your back. Ghal had been that for her, and now she was gone.

There was an answer to who had done this, and why. It could be the Nihil, Ghal didn't have any other enemies that Velko knew of, but either way there was an answer that needed to be found. Velko would find out who had taken Ghal and why, and when she did she would make sure that Ghal's death got the justice it deserved.

But until then, Velko swore to herself that she would guide Starlight through any hardship that came next. It was what was right. It was what was needed.

She owed Ghal that much.

THE END

NEXT ISSUE:
A thrilling new tale starring Zam Wesell and Jango Fett, exclusive to *Star Wars Insider*!

JEDI MASTER'S QUIZ

Every powerful entity endures epic fails on its path to domination, even the mighty First Order. Test your sequel trilogy knowledge of First Order failures in this issue's folly-filled quiz.

Compiled by Jay Stobie

"THE FIRST ORDER REIGNS."

In the face of a plucky Resistance, what were the First Order's most ostentatious oversights?

A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH?

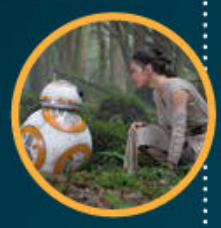
1: What did Kylo Ren suggest could replace General Hux's indoctrinated army?

A/ A clone army
B/ A droid army
C/ Mercenaries
D/ Volunteers

2: Who delivered the bad news that BB-8 had escaped Jakku?

A/ General Hux
B/ FN-2199
C/ Lieutenant Mitaka
D/ Captain Phasma

3: Why did Kylo Ren abandon the search for BB-8 on Takodana?



A/ He found the storage device that Poe Dameron had taken
B/ He believed he could extract the information from Rey's mind
C/ He no longer felt the need to locate Luke Skywalker
D/ Starkiller Base had already destroyed Hosnian Prime

4: What weakness did Resistance starfighters target during the attack on Starkiller Base?

A/ Exhaust port
B/ Shield generators
C/ Thermal oscillator
D/ Equatorial trench

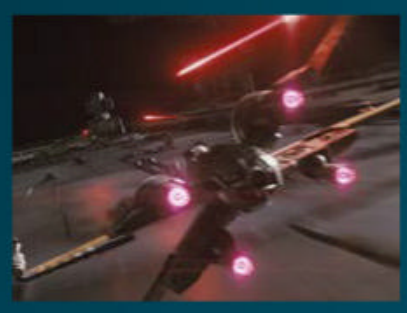
5: Which planet did Starkiller Base unsuccessfully take aim at during the Resistance assault?

A/ D'Qar
B/ Ahch-To
C/ Jakku
D/ Coruscant

DEFINITELY NOT THE LAST JEDI

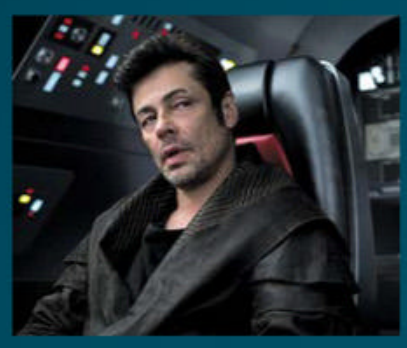
6: What made the First Order dreadnought vulnerable to the Resistance bombing run?

A/ Malfunctioning ventral turbolasers
B/ Empty missile launchers
C/ Blocked proton torpedo tubes
D/ Destroyed surface cannons



7: On Canto Bight, where did Finn and Rose Tico find DJ, the slicer who aided their infiltration of Snoke's Star Destroyer?

A/ The casino
B/ The jail
C/ The stables
D/ The racetrack



8: Whose heroic act resulted in Snoke's flagship becoming incapacitated beyond repair?

A/ General Organa
B/ Commander D'Acy
C/ Vice Admiral Holdo
D/ Captain Dameron

9: On Crait, what prompted Kylo Ren to divert his TIE fighters away from the Resistance speeders?

A/ The *Millennium Falcon*
B/ Resistance reinforcements from the Outer Rim
C/ Luke Skywalker
D/ The Final Order

10: Why did Luke Skywalker engage in a duel with Kylo Ren on Crait?

A/ To allow the Resistance to escape
B/ To defeat Kylo Ren once and for all
C/ To redeem Ben Solo
D/ To prove he was still a legend

RESISTANCE ON THE RISE

11: Where did the Resistance establish a hidden base?

A/ Sinta Glacier Colony
B/ Kijimi
C/ Pasaana
D/ Ajan Kloss

12: Why did General Hux ultimately betray the First Order?

A/ To join the Resistance
B/ To avenge the New Republic
C/ To see Kylo Ren lose
D/ To gain Finn's respect

13: What key piece of information did Rey retrieve from the TIE fighter she stole?

A/ Schematics for the Sith fleet
B/ Exegol's location
C/ The Emperor's detailed plans
D/ An ancient Jedi secret

14: Why was the Resistance's ground assault on the First Order Star Destroyer so effective?

A/ Their landing ship had a cloaking device
B/ They did not face any opposition
C/ They destroyed the Star Destroyer's sensors
D/ Their orbak mounts could not be "jammed"

15: Who engaged in combat with Ben Solo but proved unable to prevent him from joining Rey?

A/ The Knights of Ren
B/ Allegiant General Pryde
C/ Elite Praetorian Guard
D/ Admiral Griss

"WHERE DID THEY GET ALL THESE FIGHTER CRAFT? THEY HAVE NO NAVY."

Determine which members of the First Order voiced these frustrated phrases:

1. "WE NEED TO SCRAMBLE OUR FIGHTERS... FIVE BLOODY MINUTES AGO!"

2. "THE DROID . . . STOLE A FREIGHTER?"

3. "I CANNOT BE BETRAYED, I CANNOT BE BEATEN. I SEE HIS MIND, I SEE HIS EVERY INTENT."

4. "MY TROOPS WILL STORM THIS BLOCK AND KILL YOU ALL."

5. "Such range and power will correct the error of Starkiller Base"

"HOW DO WE BLOW IT UP? THERE'S ALWAYS A WAY TO DO THAT."

Identify these First Order weapons that were destroyed by the Resistance.

HOW DID YOU DO?

Were you able to execute your orders and find the correct answers?

0-9: General Hugs? The Resistance would have had no problem defeating you.

10-19: Officer-level thinking. Perhaps you might have improved the First Order's odds.

20-24: You could've made an excellent Supreme Leader. The First Order needed your wisdom.

ANSWERS QUIZ: 1. A, 2. C, 3. B, 4. C, 5. A, 6. D, 7. B, 8. C, 9. A, 10. A, 11. D, 12. C, 13. B, 14. D, 15. A.

"HERE DID THEY GET ALL THESE FIGHTER CRAFT? THEY HAVE NO NAVY." 1. Captain Canaday, 2. Kylo Ren, 3. Supreme Leader Snoke, 4. Captain Phasma, 5. Allegiant General Pryde.

"HOW DO WE BLOW IT UP? THERE'S ALWAYS A WAY TO DO THAT." 1. *Supremacy*, 2. *Steadfast*, 3. Starkiller Base, 4. *Fulminatrix*.

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209

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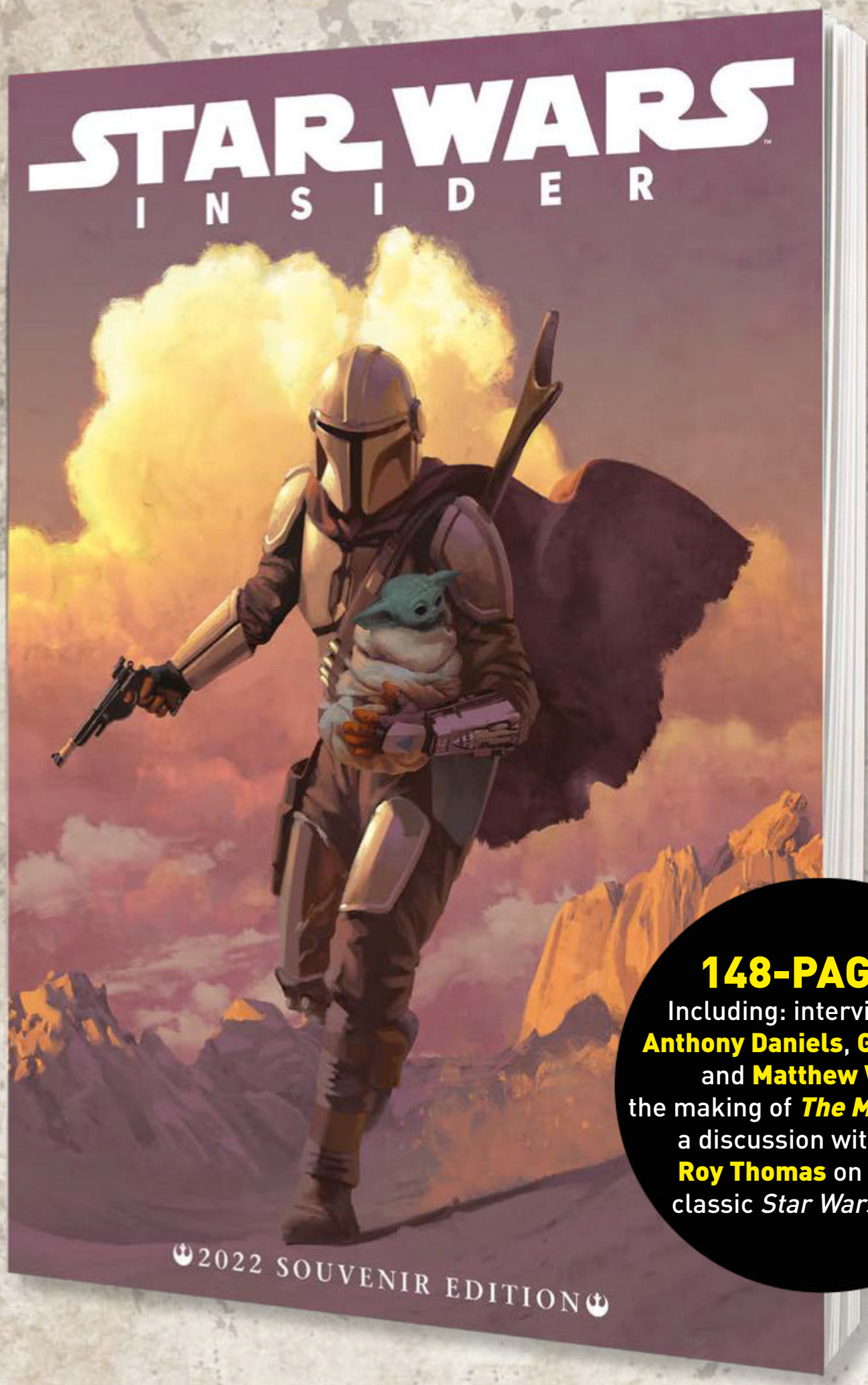

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